



# *A Near Miss*

Awards Issue 2002



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*A Near Miss*  
**Awards Issue**  
**2002**

University of South Carolina Spartanburg

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## Preface

In the 2002 issue of *A Near Miss*, The University of South Carolina Spartanburg proudly presents the works of young artists and writers from high schools across the upstate. Their poetry, fiction, and visual art demonstrate not only creative talent, but also wisdom, honesty, courage, and humor.

Each piece of work selected for publication underwent rigorous editorial scrutiny and was chosen from among thousands of submissions. Congratulations to each student whose talent and hard work are showcased in this edition.

Congratulations are also due elsewhere: much of the credit for the level of quality of the work appearing in *A Near Miss* must be attributed to the teachers who instruct, motivate, and inspire their gifted students. We thank them for their dedication and enthusiasm.

*Marilyn Knight*  
*Editor*

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Susanne Gunter

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# **The Prize Winners**

## **2002**

## **Ephemeron**

The first lesson was merely for observation.  
When she smoothed out a bill from her  
    coin bag,  
He asked her for wine instead.  
She presented him with a tall flute,  
the base of bronze.  
He offered her a sip.  
She shook her head three times.

The next lesson:  
instead of criticizing her knuckles with  
    something flat and quick,  
he accompanied her on his violin.  
When her fingers skipped notes,  
his bow squeaked along beside her;  
the effect was a seamless coupling  
    clumped with raspy spots  
that made her redden.

Her handmaid thought her dim  
for putting up with an instructor  
    of such uncertain mettle.  
She repeated the promises  
she'd made to her father:  
the instructor was temporary,  
    transitory.

She nonetheless began to buy scarves  
in salmon,  
turquoise,  
spearmint,  
imagining the connotations  
these colors carried:  
the grace of something born underwater,

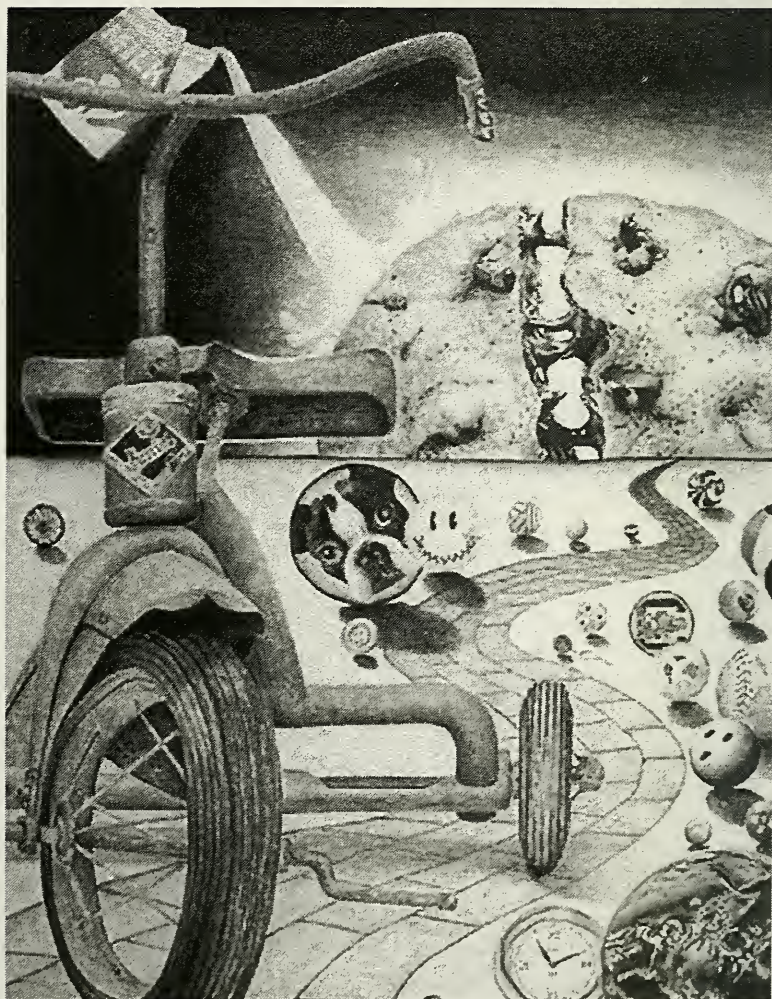
saltwater stretched and paper-wrapped  
into ironic confection,  
the sharpness of a bitten stem.

She brought a jar from the cellar  
and filled it with wine  
to keep under the spinet.

*Leah Coakley*  
*Fine Arts Center*  
*Claire Bateman*

*First Place Art*

## Childhood Memories



*Bonnie West  
Dorman High School  
Susanne Gunter*

## **Phantom Pains**

"Look at these babies," Diane says, cupping her enormous breasts in her hands and turning sideways in the mirror. "Double D's and worth every ounce of fat on the rest of me."

She smooths a black T-shirt over her bulging stomach, and I watch with my head tilted to the side, the telephone receiver wedged between my neck and skull. Patrick said he'd be home all day. It's 4:23, and he's not there. I punch the back of my chair impatiently and hang up the phone.

"I only wear guys' pants," Diane continues, still watching herself in the mirror. "They're much more comfortable, and I hate it when fat girls try to squeeze into stuff that's too small for them."

We have family reunions every three years, alternating from my grandmother's house in Houston to my aunt's house in Easley. My cousin Diane, who only wears guys' pants, just earned a degree in library science. The fact that there's such a thing as library science makes me tired. She and her breasts arrived today from Charleston.

My aunt's house looks like something you'd see drawn in a magazine—in one of those games for children with the caption, "What's wrong with this picture?" The children would then circle with their red crayons the fish lying on the floor, the bottle serving as a table leg, and the television in the refrigerator. My Aunt Janice is the Queen of Unfinished Projects and Tacky Lawn Decorations.

"Let's go outside," Diane says.

We walk into the backyard where the woods used to be. Janice had them "thinned" by a neighbor who basically cut down every single tree. It looks like a toxic waste dump, and we can see the rusted barbed wire fence of the property line from the deck. My dad told her she should've hired a professional. She told him to shut up and mind his own business.

The treehouse that my brother and I built is still there, in the only tree left standing. We slept in it only once, and the flowered comforter that I spilt a citronella candle on is still lying in the floor, mildewed to the wood.

Aunt Janice built her fishpond by herself using some of our excess pool liner after we had our in-ground redone a few years ago. She never got around to burying the edges, so the pond is just a shallow hole with a jagged flap of aqua and purple pool liner draped across the inside. The white cherub

statues surrounding the pond are still stained and missing fingers. One has a hole in his skull. All the fish are dead.

"Alan and I are still together," she says proudly, watching for my reaction from the corner of her eye.

"Wow," I say to make her happy.

"Yeah, but sometimes I think the only thing that keeps us together is the sex."

There's a little silence. Diane and I never talk about anything serious, and I'm surprised that she offers this small sign of weakness.

"But it *is* really, really, really good sex," she adds, and suddenly, I'm not sympathetic toward her anymore.

"I just realized," she says, turning to me, "that I don't know something about you that's kinda important."

I know what she's going to ask. And she already knows the answer, she just wants to hear me say it.

"Are you a *virgin*?"

"Yes," I lie. It's what she expects to hear, so I don't disappoint her.

"Well, I could tell you some stories, but nevermind—maybe when you're older."

I stand with my hands on my hips, looking at her. She must be the stupidest person I know.

"When I'm older? Diane, we're the same age," I say.

"I was just kidding. Look, if you really want to know, I'll tell you."

"Nevermind," I say, walking away. A blue van pulls into the driveway. It's a rental car, I can tell. My older cousin Roland climbs out of the driver's side, adjusting himself visibly. His Life Partner, Vinny, climbs out soon after, bending over to touch his toes, stretching. He has on candy-striped Richard Simmons shorts—swear to God. We all knew Roland was gay for years, but he's only been openly homosexual for about eight months now. He and Vinny met at work in Boston and moved to Florida together where they now take trips to Disney World once every three months. I called their house once and got their personalized answering machine. They talk in singsong unison through the whole thing, "Hey, you've reached Roland and Vinney, leave a message after the beep..." with a Duran Duran song playing in the background. It was disturbing.

I bypass Vinny and walk to Roland who also has on Richard Simmons-esque shorts and tube socks pulled up almost to his knees.

"Hey, Jen," he says, opening his arms to me. I don't want to hug him, and we embrace awkwardly, standing with our feet apart, leaning in for those quick little back pats. "This is Vinny."

I smile warmly, letting him know that I have absolutely nothing against gays. Vinny and I shake hands while Roland watches, standing with his arms crossed, like a referee.

Vinny is so ugly.

"James and Michelle weren't too far behind us," says Roland. He likes to report things. It makes him feel important.

James and Michelle are more cousins—older ones from Boston. They have one child named Christopher who was born prematurely this year and has to wear glasses already. They arrive just as the three of us are climbing the deck steps. I don't know where Diane is. Michelle parks their brown Ford Taurus beside the van and starts to wave. James can't drive because he lost his right arm in a house fire eight years ago. He likes to brag that a meteor crashed through his roof and set the whole thing on fire, but really, he just fell asleep with a cigarette in his mouth.

Michelle unclips Christopher from his car seat and swings him over one hip. He looks like a little Ghandi. Aunt Janice walks out onto the deck to greet everyone. She's a hugger and pulls Vinny to her violently, though she's never met him.

Roland, James, and Diane are all Janice's children—Diane being the youngest at twenty. Heather is the oldest at thirty-seven and is mentally retarded. She's been in her room all day with her door closed, the construction paper "keep out" sign dangling sideways. Keep is spelled wrong, with an "ea" instead of two e's.

"Where's Heather?" James asks, striking a match on the deck rail, "She's usually out here by now."

"She's being punished," Aunt Janice says. "She heard me ordering a burial plot for Grandma last night on the phone and threw the biggest fit because I didn't get her one, too."

I laugh, and Vinny wants to also, but doesn't know if it's OK. I want to shake him by the shoulders and say, "Laugh, damnit!" but don't. Janice puts an arm around Michelle and leads us all inside.

Phantom pains are the scariest thing in world to me. James used to talk about them after the fire, but I always thought he was lying. Then I read an article about them in a medical journal—how amputee victims suffer from horrible pains in the limb that was removed—in the area that's not even there anymore. And how they can still feel the limb, still trying to reach for a cup of coffee with a removed arm, things like that. It's the scariest thing in the world to me.

Heather's out of her room and roaming around. She says hello to me, but calls me Diane. Everyone is setting the table and getting ready for dinner. I can hear my dad laughing over everyone else, and Ghandi is crying. I walk back to my aunt's room and shut the door. I call Patrick again, and this time, he's home.

"Where were you," I ask. "I tried to call before."

"I was here," he says, almost rudely to see if I'll challenge his answer.

"Well, I'm dying," I say. "When are you coming?"

"When do you need me there?"

"Now! I need you now—as soon as possible."

He sighs.

"Give me five minutes and I can be ready to leave."

"Good," I say. "Dinner is soon, so hurry."

OK, see you in about 35 minutes," he says, and I hang up the phone.

I pass my brother Clay in the hall.

"Everyone's here," I say, "where've you been?"

His eyes are glassy, the pupils huge. He's stoned.

"Out," he says, smiling lazily.

I just shove past him and into the kitchen. It makes me mad that he always takes the easy way out. He should be suffering right along with me.

I can see James through the glass sliding doors leading out to the side deck. Janice drew a grid on the glass in red marker to keep birds from flying into it, and the lines streak across James' face while he leans on his good arm, smoking a cigarette. He looks older than usual—more tired. Janice shoves a blue bowl of potato salad into my arms and says, "Here, stir this and put it in the refrigerator."

I watch James smoke while I stir, then open the refrigerator. It's one of the old brown ones from the late 70's or something. There's a can of hairspray on the shelf next to the milk.

"What's this doing here," I ask, holding up the bottle to Janice.

"Oh, Heather must have put that in there," she says over her shoulder.

"Put it in the bathroom, will you?"

A few years ago, Janice started to re-do the bathroom for Heather, but never finished. There's a plastic carousel horse in the corner with a few towels draped across its back. I shut the door and lock it, standing in the middle of the room for a minute, feeling quiet. The shower curtain is drawn, and I remember how, when I was little and used to visit Janice more often, I was always scared to open the shower curtain—I thought I'd find Heather

drowned in her own bath water from the night before. So I never opened it, and still don't as I sit down on the toilet.

Some of my best thinking is done on the toilet. Today, I remember babysitting for my neighbor who had 6 foster children when I was 13—how I hated them so much. I think that it's been three months, and I know for sure—I'm certain. I cried at the grocery store a few weeks ago for no reason—just broke down in the produce section in front of about 6 people. I was certain then, too, and bought a pregnancy test just to make sure. I never used it. It's been three months, and I know I'm pregnant the way Roland knows he's gay.

I wonder how I'm going to tell Patrick.

In the middle of making dinner, Janice runs out of mayonnaise and asks Roland if he'll run out and get some. Vinny stands up like a faithful little puppy and says he'll go, too.

"Yeah, me too," I say. Roland and Vinny look at me, and I feel like I'm doing something mean by going.

Patrick pulls into the driveway as we're walking out to the blue rental van. I jog to the driver's side and am there to hug him before he even gets out of the car.

"Thank God," I say, burying my head in his shirt. It's a collared blue one, and I smile, knowing that he dressed up to meet my family. I introduce Patrick to Vinny and Roland who look like twins, standing side-by-side in the driveway. Patrick smiles and shakes their hands vigorously, being sure to make eye contact to show that he has absolutely nothing against gays.

"I guess you guys can go ahead without me," I say. "I'll stay here."

They don't even try to hide their relieved smiles as they scramble into their seats, and we stand on the deck and watch them drive away. I hate to see grown men riding in vans.

"So what'd you think?" I ask Patrick.

"About Vinny?" He smiles knowingly and nods. "Nice legs."

I laugh and punch him in the arm as we walk inside.

I hate introducing boyfriends to family. It's one of the most difficult things to do. When Patrick and I walk into the kitchen, everyone turns and falls silent. Even Ghandi stops crying.

"This is Patrick," I say slowly, as if they're a pack of territorial wolves that startle easy.

My father is the first to speak. He knows Patrick and says hello, asks how he's been. The rest of the family eases a little at my father's approval.

"Oh," Diane says, biting a carrot in half loudly, "that's right. You're the science boyfriend. Physics or something like that."

I watch her twirl the rest of the carrot around her mouth and want to hit her.

"Yeah," Patrick says. "Something like that."

I make the introduction rounds, and I notice Patrick lingers on James. I'll have to explain the missing arm to him later. I'm glad Heather's in her room again. He's not ready for her. Clay slumps into the kitchen and slaps Patrick on the back.

"Hey man," he says. "You oughta come play with me and Keith sometime."

"Yeah, sounds good," Patrick says as Clay grabs a handful of chips and walks out onto the deck to smoke a cigarette.

"Play?" my aunt asks.

"Guitar," Patrick says proudly. He loves to tell people he can play. *Oh, God, I think. Conversation.* I want to get Patrick out of the kitchen as fast as possible.

"Oh, how lovely," my aunt says, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Well, I'm gonna show Patrick around the house," I say, grabbing him by the arm and pulling him away from the kitchen before anyone can object.

I don't stop walking until we're in the foyer.

"What's wrong," he asks.

"Nothing," I say, smoothing the front of his shirt. "I just don't want to be around them right now."

He nods, and I know he understands. I take his hand and lead him up the stairs to the attic where Diane and I used to sleep when we stayed the summer at Janice's. We lay down on a bare mattress in the middle of the room, and Patrick drapes his arm over my side, flattening his hand against my stomach. I want to tell him—right now.

"If we ever broke up," I say, "this is what I'd miss the most—just laying around together."

He lifts his head a little and looks over my shoulder at me.

"Don't say things like that," he says quietly. He has no idea.

Something about mattresses with no sheets always makes me feel dirty.

We all sit at one big table in the dining room, with my father at one end and Janice at the other. I sit beside Patrick and across from Roland and Vinny. I know they're holding hands under the table. Diane stares at me strangely from the corner over a plate of chicken with those stupid I-just-got-a-degree-in-library-science eyes. Food starts moving around.

"So how long have you and Patrick been dating?" Janice asks.

I look at Patrick with my eyebrows raised.

"Five months?" I say, guessing. He nods.

"Ooh, great, great," she says chewing.

"Alan and I have been dating for a year and a half," Diane says quietly. I think I'm the only one who hears her.

The conversation continues aimlessly with the cycle of food. Heather sits angrily because Janice told her to be quiet when she tried to recite the food pyramid over everyone else talking. Michelle takes a second helping of potato salad, and James watches her, disgusted.

"Not hungry, are you, sweetheart?" he says sarcastically, poking her in the arm with his fork. Everyone turns to look at them. Only Clay laughs.

"What's the matter with you, son," my dad asks him, "don't be rude."

"Christ," Michelle says. "You can be such an ass sometimes, you know that, James?" She got fat after they married, and he's disliked her a little ever since. She can tell and throws her napkin on the table. My aunt tries to change the subject, and Ghandi starts crying again. I feel sick, and push my chair away from the table, running to the bathroom with my hand over my mouth. It's 7:00, and I shouldn't be getting sick.

Janice runs after me and knocks on the door.

"Are you OK?" she asks over the flushing of the toilet.

"Yeah," I say, wiping my mouth and leaning back against the side of the tub.

Everyone turns and looks when I walk back to the table. For some reason, I just stand in the doorway, letting them stare.

"Are you OK, Jen?" my dad asks. "Must've been the potato salad."

Roland and Vinny nod stupidly in unison.

"Not my potato salad," says Janice defensively. "I think it's just the weather and all of this excitement."

I'm still standing in the doorway, my hand on my stomach, watching Diane stare at me. She puts her fork down.

"You're pregnant aren't you," she says, more like a statement than a question.

Janice turns sharply to look at me.

"Are you?" she asks, leaning in.

"No!" Patrick says before I can answer. "Of course not!"

He looks you at me expectantly, and I stare back. *Love me*, I think.  
*Say it's OK.*

"Oh God," he says slowly. I don't answer, and he knows.

"Jenna?" my dad says in a way that makes me want to cry. He makes me want to cry like Ghandi's crying—loud and uninhibited with someone like Michelle there to tell me not to. Diane hasn't stopped staring, and she's almost smiling now. I want to beat her face in.

"Oh, God," Patrick repeats. I know what he's thinking. Not now—not in front of these people. Just a minute ago, he was bragging about playing guitar and wondering what to eat next. It's almost funny.

I know he'll leave.

Clay starts to laugh, quietly at first, and then louder.

"Christ, son," my dad yells at him. "What the hell is your problem? This isn't funny!"

Clay keeps laughing.

"Pregnant!" he screams, clapping his hands and spilling a drink.

"What the hell," my father says, "Are you, *high*, son?"

Patrick pushes his chair back and stands up. He just keeps saying, "oh my god" and "I'm sorry" over and over. He looks at me and says, "I'm sorry," then turns to leave. I feel sick again and bring my hands to my face.

"Congratulations," Vinny says pathetically, and I want to punch his face in right along with Diane's.

It's midnight, and I'm lying on the same mattress in the attic. We're all spending the night, and people are scattered on sleeping bags all over the house. I didn't put any sheets on my mattress, though Janice offered some. After Patrick left, I threw up again—on the dining room table. I never cried, and I don't even remember if I said anything. Everyone else had plenty to say, even Heather. On my way out the house, she'd stopped me and tried to recite the food pyramid again. Afterwards, I just sat by the fishpond by myself until Vinny showed up. He was the only one who came to check on me.

"It's really not that bad," he'd said, standing awkwardly, tugging on his candy-striped shorts. "You still have so much to live for."

He said that like he thought I'd jump into the pond and drown myself. I just stared at him for a minute and then said "thank you," so he'd leave. He really is ugly.

I close my eyes and rub them hard so I won't have to remember any part of today, but I keep feeling Patrick behind me with his hand on my stomach. I remember James and his phantom pains and wrap my arms around myself.

I believe him now. I think about walking downstairs in the dark to where he's asleep on the couch and telling him—I think about telling him, “You were right, James. There really *are* phantom pains. And they hurt like hell.”

*Emily Smith*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Paul Thomas*

*First Place Art*

## Untitled



*Grace Poser  
Spartanburg High School  
John Dennis*

## Legacy

My mother dreams in silk.  
Every night, she lights  
three red candles, placing them  
above her head, to prompt dreams  
in her narrow bed of flax

Each dawn, she breathes  
on the candles, middle first,  
then lifts her pillow to find  
yards and yards of silk,  
most often between lilac and gold.  
When Father died, it was blue,  
and when Grandpa died, it shone  
black as onyx.

I often see people walk by  
dressed in Mama's dreams.

Tonight will be my first time  
dreaming silk.

Mama has made all the preparations;  
fresh sheets, new candles of fine red wax.  
I bathe, then light them, one by one  
before folding my body  
into the clean cream sheets.

And I wonder as I drift off  
if I will fail her. I don't have  
her height, her golden hair,  
I'm small and dark.

I don't speak well in front of crowds.  
I hate tape measures and sewing machines,  
and I've never been described  
as delicate.

My dreams are smoke filled,  
dark...mainly purple.  
Hands made of cloud  
rub against my face,  
pressing tightly  
as apparitions can against walls of skin.  
The last think I see before waking  
is my mother, smiling  
and waving the psuedo-hands away,  
touching my forehead lightly with her own warm fingers.

I wake to see her  
sitting patiently at the foot of bed.  
Avoiding her eyes,  
I rise slowly.  
I breathe in deeply, painfully  
before pushing it aside to find  
underneath: layer upon layer  
of silver velvet.

*Maggie Johnston  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

*Second Place Art*

## **Sunbathe**



*Jenna Spooone  
Woodruff High School  
Diana Olencki*

*A Near Miss 17*

## *Second Place Poetry*

### **Elvis**

railroad tracks always cut like zippers at night  
clipping silhouettes of ink-blot riders  
to shove between the pages of a telephone book or a bible  
it's no different tonight—me, him,  
the smell of gasoline soaking in the floorboards

he likes my shirt, likes it when  
the stripes go that way—horizontal  
I like it when he clips my thumb between two fingers,  
his other hand finding me in the dark,  
and then lets go

he holds everything like a cigarette

the telephone rings in the hall  
you should get that, he says,  
voice crowded in his throat as he sits up  
I forget about the darkness while I'm gone,  
and then he's beside me in a white wife-beater,  
shoulders cold porcelain,  
hands on my hips

it's Halloween somewhere outside  
these dead blue windows  
he forgets, braces himself, forgets again  
the sheets are unfolded now, white and cold  
through to the floor, the same cold porcelain—  
that bathroom sink porcelain—  
pinched between my knees

I can hear the train coming and listen,  
surprised, too, at the noises I make

everything is louder in the dark

*Emily Smith  
Woodruff High School  
Paul Thomas*

## Concerning Sunshine

My mother always dresses me in tones of cool yellow. My name is Sunshine, and she is constantly singing that damn song, "You are my sunshine..." Yuck. I am thirteen years old, and I have never left my neighborhood without my mother. My mother refuses to buy a television set because she says that only uneducated people fry their brains with such garbage. I have read over two thousand books in my lifetime, all containing at least fifteen chapters. I have never eaten a cheeseburger, and my mother will not allow me to go to the park to play with other children, because she says that they are dirty and diseased. She used the same excuse when I asked her if I could go to public school. I detest the color yellow.

I spend most of my days trying to avoid my mother. This isn't an easy task, considering we only have seven rooms in the house. The cupboard is too cramped, my room is too obvious (she always looks there first), and there isn't much furniture in the other rooms. Lack of furniture makes me feel vulnerable, like the large antelope on a small plain, pictured in my World Book Encyclopedia. My father took almost everything when he left, except me. My mother said that he would have taken me if he could breast-feed. Personally, I think I would have preferred a bottle.

I remember one day when I fell from the tree outside; I was perched up there like Huck Finn, attempting to hide from my mother—she was trying to put ribbons in my hair. I was leaning to reach for another branch when the limb under my foot cracked in half and sent me tumbling to the ground. I hit with a dull thump, and the neighbor, who was conveniently doing yard work, immediately rushed over to see if I was injured. I felt the pain stab upward from the sliver of bone that jutted out from my leg, the pain was there but my senses had been pacified. My mother spotted the neighbor, and came bolting out of the house, yards of yellow ribbon trailing behind her. She screamed at the man, "What the hell are you doing? Get out of my yard!" The man stared at her as if she had lost her mind. He said that I needed to see a doctor, and that he was only trying to help. I sat there as they argued, quietly playing with the sliver of bone. I can barely use my leg since the bone didn't heal right. I am convinced my mother wanted it this way because it is much harder to run from her. Now, I always have stupid yellow ribbons in my hair.

My mother thinks she knows everything. She has said so a couple of

times. I actually believed her the first time she told me. I was only three, and she had been trying to get me to read from a Grimm brothers book of fairy tales. I asked her why it was so easy for her—to this she replied, “Because your mother knows everything.” It was such a mysterious answer it had to be true, and besides I was three and she was my mother. Her knowledge was my knowledge. Then, after a few years, I started to doubt my mother’s “mysterious” knowledge of *everything*. It first came to me when I asked my mother what an animal was while flipping through a picture book of sea creatures. She told me to look it up. Then, when she couldn’t help me when I wanted to learn Latin I knew that she was a phony. If she knew *everything* then she should know the basis of all Romance languages. One day, when I asked her if my father had written me anything she said; “No, and he will never write you anything. I know he loves you, but he will never write you.” Of course when I asked her how she knew this she said, “Because your mother knows everything.” I could feel the frostbite of her words permeating my skull cavity. I wanted to scream at her, “If you know everything, then why didn’t you know how to keep father happy and at home with me, where he belongs?” I never asked her this question. I knew that it would inevitably make her cry. I didn’t believe anything else she said after I found the shoebox full of unopened letters with my name imprinted in the center and my father’s address in the left-hand corner. I never opened them. Even though I had wished for him to write, at that moment, I didn’t want to know the words that those letters contained. I felt that by hiding them my mother was protecting me by some sort of evil that would destroy any sort of bond between us. The truth was, I wanted to love my mother, instead of a few pieces of browning notebook paper with promises that were inevitably broken.

I hate to see her cry; she emits a terrible wail, as tears stream down her face. She often buries her face in a pillow while she beats her feet against the ground like a child throwing a temper tantrum. Most of the time, she blubbers and gasps for my father, because she knows that she’s forty and doughy. She isn’t his twenty-year old secretary, blonde with long legs and a sensual aura. For this reason, there isn’t a single mirror in the house. I remember when the window in the kitchen caught her reflection; she threw a pot through it. After that day, she papered the inside of all the windows, exclaiming, “Who needs sunlight?” She gathered me in her arms and said, “I have all of my sunshine right here.” She reminded me of Queen Elizabeth when she had all the mirrors removed from her palace. According to her biography, she couldn’t bear to see her reflection because the lead paint she used to lighten her face was eating her skin. I felt sorry for my mother, and I wanted to tell her that she was just as beautiful as a leggy blonde, but that would have been a lie.

We rarely leave the house, only to go to the store or the post office. I hate going to the store because on the way back I have to pass the park, where all of the kids are playing. Today, we are going to Bi-Lo because my mother has an extreme craving for Starbuck's Java Chip ice cream. We get into the car, which is smothered with silence as we pull out of our drive. I haven't left the house in a week, so even though we are driving by the park, I am utterly excited to be traveling. In the Moonlight Music Hall, I imagine a fine dining hall and a ballroom decorated with large crushed velvet curtains and a beautiful woman with the face of Marilyn Monroe singing on top of the piano. In the courthouse, I see the stern judge waiting for the defense to speak. At Spring Middle School, I envision teachers standing beside thick cedar desks with shelves full of books lining the walls behind them as they lecture their diligent students. These are all places that I will never see the inside of until I am fully-grown, large buildings with treasures unknown to me. We pull into the Bi-Lo parking lot, which is full, so it is very hard to find a space. As we drive around, I study the faces of people packing groceries into their cars. The man with the lonely gaze that packs frozen dinner after frozen dinner into his trunk, the elderly lady whose hands shake as she carries a small basket containing pastel pink Orly nail polish and Prell shampoo. Everyone, even the children that impatiently tug at their mother's shirts, seems washed out.

Inside, my mother instructs me to stay at her side. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot a rack of books. Despite my mother's instructions, I am drawn to the rack, but as I study the titles, I see that there is nothing there for me—only cheesy romance novels and boring sci-fi. It would be nice if Bi-Lo had a good contemporary literature section for young adults that included something more than the latest Goosebumps or Fear Street by R.L. Stine. I really enjoy stories that are fantasy fiction like Francesca Lia block's Weetzie Bat chronicles; however, I only have one part because our library isn't exactly with the times. I turn to where my mother had been about a minute before, but she isn't there any longer. I panic, scanning the crowd for her fat frame; I check all of the aisles and frozen food section. I begin crying with my back turned to the other shoppers, my face buried in the magazine rack. A murmur from aisle three summons my tears to stop; I look over into the eyes of a girl my age. She is chanting under her breath, "My father beats me and my mother watches, my father beats me and my mother watches."

Slowly, I approach the girl; I whisper into her ear, "My mother hides me." Her glance said that she didn't care as she continued on her chant. I say louder, "My mother hides me." Her glance holds more intensity this time as she increases the volume of her voice. I tell her I have never seen my own

reflection, and she breaks her chant, "I can see my reflection in my mother's eyes." A woman comes barreling up the aisle; it is the girl's mother. The girl clasps our hands together, a hard round object slides into my hand as she whispers, "You listened, thank you." I step away from her as she walks to her mother.

Without looking at the object I place it in my pocket and begin to look for my mother once again. When I find her she scolds me and forces me to push the groceries to the car. If she did it herself she could burn some calories before she goes home to devour a gallon of Java Chip ice cream; I think to myself as I unload the bags into the backseat. At home, my mother eats ice cream in her room with the door closed. I can hear her wails from down the hall as I take out the object the girl gave me. It is a silver compact with two mirrors. I hide underneath my bed and study the lines of my face as if I am getting to know a new friend. I remove the ribbons and allow the curls of my yellow hair to fall along my shoulders, examining the strange companion I have been living with all along, the beautiful stranger, with her father's smile and all of the knowledge of two thousand books. Alice, finally on the other side of the looking glass.

*Ashlee Goforth  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

*Third Place Art*

## **Ink Drawing**



*Anthony Wilson  
Dorman High School  
David Benson*

## Dry Elegy

Time pulls far harder than gravity.

The little girl who lived in the house  
across the street from mine,  
Jessica Kimberly Stanton,  
fell down the stairs one week ago and  
broke her neck. She  
fell not like an autumn leaf  
or a drifting feather,  
but like a bag of stones,  
whirling rhythmically in the air.

The physicists and physicians,  
in their infinite wisdom,  
pronounced the child dead by gravity.

I, however, know better.  
It was time that brought Jessie tumbling violently  
to the foot of the stairs.  
She possessed exactly seven years,  
five months,  
twenty-three days,  
eleven hours,  
forty-two minutes,  
and thirty-seven seconds to live.

And she did.

I told the black-clad mourners outside the house  
where she had flickered so brightly  
to take off their armbands,  
to drive back to their homes,  
and to leave her memory untainted.

Some stared at me hatefully.  
Most just cried.

The grandmother, though,  
smiled knowingly and  
almost warmly.

And I left the funeral with this:

we all dream that we are falling  
but some of us are harder to wake.

*Michael Castle*  
*Daniel High School*  
*Nancy Swanson*

## At A Recital

Long ago, I learned from my father  
how to anticipate notes and music,  
the satisfaction of leading tones,  
movements tiered like a spice cabinet,  
structured, patterned, boxes and bottles of sound.  
Every piece a neatly-packed parcel by design,  
or a sound marriage  
founded on routine,  
because the couple is comfortable  
knowing there aren't any new notes to play  
but different ways to play them.

The guy in front of me is nervous  
and wants to hold the girl's hand next to him.  
Nudges his arm a hair closer, pulls back,  
she's bored.

There's a girl asleep on my shoulder.  
Saliva pooling on my shirt,  
her head starts to slip down.  
She thought the harpist was dull.  
I'm trying to see the harpist,  
the movements of her hands,  
very fluid, rolling,  
like she's wafting steam  
over a cauldron.

I saw a sitarist once who played the same way,  
but his face showed no emotion,  
though he must've pulled some of the same notes  
as this harpist does now.

There are only so many.

The girl on my shoulder stirs and snaps upright,  
remembering she doesn't really know me.  
She doesn't see the wet spot on my shoulder,

ungrateful for an arm that didn't move,  
though her head cut off the blood flow.  
She rubs her eyes a bit, then sighs,  
almost in unison with Lady Ennui in front,  
who's been at it for some time,  
and doesn't hold the boy's hand.  
I enjoy the music more than I used to,  
terrified that these girls will affect me  
that I won't hear harps anymore,  
but might absorb their distaste,  
and end up married to drooler.

*Nathaniel Coburn  
Spartanburg High School  
Mr. Bill Pell*

*Third Place Art*

## Untitled



*Emory Cash  
Spartanburg High School  
John Dennis*

## Those Occurrences

If worse come to worse, you can sing Barry Manilow songs in the street and tell yourself that people in the obituaries have it a lot worse than you do. But usually you'll find something, some small detail in your life, that will make your self-reassurance pointless. And you know that *today* will be the *day* that you kill yourself.

I wasn't molested as a child and I didn't witness a murder, I wasn't even all that depressing as a teenager. Sometimes a light in you just dies and nothing is worth it. That's what happened to me. One morning I woke up and it didn't make sense. People love. Lie hurt smile die. Death. It adds up to the same ending. All these walking books and they all have the same ending.

This isn't meant to make you feel sorry for me, or to make you feel anything else towards me for that matter. I just don't want those stories to go around saying I was a manic-depressive shut-in whose only joy in life was the release of the blade after a new slash was made on her arm. That isn't me at all. I don't even cut myself. I just want my story clear.

Before it was worthless, I used to observe. People, especially. I'd sit on a bench in the park and wonder what everyone here is *really* like. I'd wonder if the fathers pushing their kids on the swings were cheating on their wives, and if the mothers talking to each other were gossiping about the broken life of someone else so that they can say they were better off than someone. None of this made me sad, though. It just made me wonder and I wanted to figure these people out. Now they just make me sick.

I used to love walking in the rain. Or watching other people walk in the rain. There was this one occasion where a boy had an opportunity to take a dry shortcut, but he took the long way and walked in the rain, hands pocketed. Things like that used to be beautiful. The way those drops landed on your head, then slid through your strands of hair, making a warm river along your face, it almost felt like crying.

The city I grew up in had cracks in the old streets and when it rained it was like watching clear blood rushing through black veins. Moving streets. The streets would move beneath your feet.

The Laundromat on the next block never failed to amuse me—mothers with impatient and sticky children, perverts, old women with tired looks in

their eyes, this one very plain girl who read Stephen King paperbacks. All of this against avocado green machines and speckled tile. The place looked the same as it did in 1970, and used to make me think. Everyone here had some place to go. But while they were here, the time one cycle of laundry took belonged to us.

I met this older man there once. He told me his life story while his collection of advertisements tee shirts dried. His name was Gregory, never Greg, he was "sixty-three years young, thank you dearly," and a teacher, I asked how kids are lately. He said that when innocence died, it took the whole damn world and consideration with it. That says more than I'll ever know. I asked him why he's still teaching. He said that after you do something for so long, after it has consumed so much of your life, after you stopped doing it wouldn't be like living. For Gregory retirement would be like death.

Life has really lost its appeal. Laundromat occurrences and rain walks don't matter. That light I used to have that made everything poetry is what kept me alive for as long as it did. Now all I see in the world is ignorance and promiscuity. Surely death is better than the bright and sparkling future society's sure to produce.

I'm looking out the window writing. Deciding. I heard that a woman shot herself and people said that she did it like a man. There's flaw in that too, you see. Suicide has to be sexist as well. I don't think I could pull a trigger. It's not that I'm afraid, I'm not. It's just that the blood staining whatever fabric-covered furniture would entertain the public, it would make art of it, my own gallery on the front page. I decide on sleeping pills, I'll sleep.

If you happen to be wondering if I'm looking towards a blissful afterlife, I'm not. I don't know that I believe in a higher being, but I don't think I do. For the longest time, I've seen religion as a way of making people feel better with no real purpose. Like a lie that you eventually begin to believe. I know that seems incredibly cynical. I would apologize except for the fact that that's what I believe.

I walked down the sidewalk of this city; I wanted to find something that would change my mind, I really did. People are still living for nothing, and it only makes me sad. I'm one of them and don't want to be. Everything will die. It will fade and it will amount to nothing. And nothing, is permanent.

Good night, I've taken my medicine. There's a chair outside the Laundromat waiting for me.

*Tera Rolander  
Spartanburg High School  
Mr. Bill Pell*

## California

My life lives on the other side of the country,  
where I dance in the streets with my clothes on backwards,  
my shoelaces sliding and turning to the restriction of the gravel.  
Around the corner of my apartment,  
fags dress up like women and flaunt their styrofoam breasts.  
Dogs beg with blue and green polka dots,  
painted mischievously by abstract artists  
that come down to visit for the winter.  
My neighbors go out to look for movie parts  
hiding secretly in the background,  
pretending to smoke a cigarette or laugh at speechless joke.  
Down the street on Patton Ave.,  
Club Mango resurrects the dead.  
Marilyn Monroe offers me a cigarette at the door,  
while James Dean serves me my food.  
I hear they stay late at night,  
cleaning up after the living,  
drinking martinis on the roof,  
watching the sunrise inhale the life of the city.

*Melissa J. Fowler  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

*Honorable Mention Art*

## **The Face of Time**



*Jenna Reynolds  
Chesnee High School  
Janis Browning*

## **The Smiles**

The silence swelled and enveloped all the small noises of the car. The air conditioner hummed loudly and blew lukewarm air into the already sweltering vehicle. I was awakened from my daydream by a droplet of sweat rolling slowly down my nose. I reached down and slowly wiped my face with the bottom of my already sickeningly moist shirt. I wiped my hand across the rough leg of my shorts futilely attempting to dry it. I eventually forgave the sweaty hand and stared out the window. Fields of tall tan wheat flew by the window as the small car sputtered down the lonely highway. I gazed intently at the bronzed sentinels as they whipped around in the light breeze. They seemed to be fighting the wind, struggling against the elements, attempting to maintain some sort of individuality in a world against them. I pressed my face to the glass. It was cool against my skin despite the unwavering heat of the interior. I lay there for a while, breathing in heavily, hoping for some relief from the heat. It did not come. I peeled my sweat-covered face from the window and wiped the invisible face from the glass. My thoughts turned to the driver of the car. My mother had always been the jovial kind of parent, never casting a condescending eye on anything that I had ever done, simply smiling and laughing through all the trials that life had to offer her. But recently, she hadn't been quite so happy. Her triumphant eyes now had become dark and sullen, seemingly oppressed by the weight of her years on earth. Her rosy cheeks had dulled and she didn't smile anymore. I think that's what bothered me most, the fact that she didn't smile anymore. The smiles had long since disappeared, and all I wanted in the world was a smile.

We drove along in silence for a time, with the small car puttering all the way. Occasionally, we would pass a sign or two, silently trumpeting our propinquity to our destination. We drove, not speaking. I yearned to hear her laugh. She hadn't laughed for so long that I had almost forgotten what it sounded like. It had now been reduced to a mere echo in the back of my mind. The memory reverberated in my mind, and the emotions swelled. All I wanted was a laugh, and it seemed as though it would never come.

After a time, a tall, faded sign came into view. It stood at an angle from the world, looking at us from a slant. Soon, an old, run-down gas station appeared beneath the sign. We pulled over and into the dusty lot. An ancient truck sat in the center of the scene with its old domed hood lifted and

small bird sitting on the fender chirping drearily in the smothering heat. Once a rich spring green, the truck had now faded to a grayed and sunburnt lime. It was apparent that it had been in a state of disrepair for quite some time now, as though it had run its course and finally capitulated in a sea of distress. The bird flew away and I looked to the other prominent features of the station. The pavement was old and cracked, and small sprouts of grass forced their way into light. A singular large fault ran prominently through the middle of the lot and came to an end at a block of four dusty gas pumps. They were the old kind with the rotating dials. We pulled up beside the cubic drones and my mother got out. "I'll be right back," she said. It was the first phrase uttered between us in hours. She walked around the front of the car and into the small building beyond the pumps. I unbuckled my belt and got out of the car. I reached upward and upward, stretching every muscle that I could. I decided I would walk around for a while and, giving a brief glance towards my mother talking to the elderly man behind the counter, I headed behind the store to see what I could find.

The paint on the side of the building was dirty, flaking white. Cement blocks raised the roof of the old building, standing against the oppressing heavens for countless years. The ground below me had turned to swelling dust without my knowledge and a quick burst of wind sent small fragments of dirt into my face. I coughed and sputtered as I tried to see my way through the blinding dust. I finally fount the dirty old wall and felt my way along it until the dust had settled. Behind the building, there was a large old propane tank, painted long ago with an over-glorified douse of silver spray paint that had long since lost its luster. Small tufts of grass sprung up here and there in the clearing, and I could find no discernible difference between the front and back of the station but for the dusty ground and lack of pumps. The back was as barren as the front, and just as forgotten. I walked around for a while, trying to work out the crick in my back, kicking up small dust clouds as I went along. I walked around the perimeter of the clearing, brushing my hand along the edge of the rough wheat field. I heard my mother open the door to the front of the store as the small bell tied on the handle jingled pleasantly. I ran around to the front of the building and got back into the sweltering car. My mother walked around the front and got in on the driver's side and handed me a cold soda. I thanked her gratefully as a dying man does to someone who has stooped to give him water. I then greedily quenched my burning thirst. She slowly started the car, and we drove on in silence.

I suddenly awoke to the sound of laughter and turned quickly, hoping for a look of joy upon my mother's face. There was none. Instead, a small look of despair crossed her face and she simply stared directly ahead as she

turned off the car. I wiped the sleep from my eyes and looked out the dirty window to the bucolic front yard outside. There was a large oak tree standing in front of the old house and an ancient tire hung from a long fraying rope from one of its branches. There were seven or eight children playing happily in the shade that the large tree afforded them, running in circles through the green carpet of grass spotted with large dusty brown regions that lacked arboreal life. A fat boy had managed to squeeze himself through the small hole in the tire and was now swinging in large, spiraling circles under the oak's gentle branches with his legs and head on opposite ends of the central tire. Cousin John. Four smaller children were holding hands and spinning in a big circle in a large dirt patch to the choral tune of "Ring around the rosy" and I was jealous of their joyous laughter. Cousin Stu, Lily, Jeremy, and Mary. Two other rambunctious children chased each other around the yard in no particular pattern with no one in particular chasing anyone in particular. Occasionally they would trip and go sliding across the yard, arise with new green or dusty brown stains across their clothes, and start running again. Second cousins whose names I could not recall. I envied all of their youthful ignorances.

Behind them on the large wrap-around porch stood the adults, somberly greeting one another, all with looks of sorrow and regret spread across their usually varied faces. Aunt Joan stood at the door to the house, dressed in darker clothes than her usual attire, greeting the family as they arrived. The screen door had been propped open with a large cinderblock and stood behind her. I got out of the car and pulled out a large garment bag after me as my mother was walking up onto the porch. I hadn't noticed her get out of the car. She walked over to Aunt Joan and greeted her with a silent hug and then walked over to Uncles Tom and Ethan who were sitting on the large swing that stood on the far side of the porch. They did not swing. She sat down between the two of them and they began to talk. My eyes were pulled away suddenly by the insistent tugging of one of the boys that I didn't remember. "Do ya wanna play chase?" He grinned.

"No." It was all that I could muster, and even that made my stomach turn and twist. A knot formed in the base of my throat and I feared breathing that it might cause me to break down in tears. I remember the last time we made our trek to my mother's childhood home. Easter. Then, all had been joyful as the small children playing in the yard were. Now, a shroud of solemnity had settled across the large clapboard home and all of the once amicable features of the house seemed to take on an air of forbidding pain and suffering. I no longer liked it here. My eyes levitated back to the porch, most of the adults had moved inside and those who returned to the heat had changed their garb to something much more somber. I walked past the circle

of children as they took a great stumble into a large cloud of dust and stepped up onto the porch. Uncle Tom now stood at the opposite end from the swing with a cigarette in his hand. I slowly walked over, my every step making a familiar clack.

"I thought you quit."

"Somehow, ya know, it just seems like mitigatin' circumstances, don't it?"

"She was the one who convinced you in the first place."

"Yeah, but I still got the prerogative to change my own mind when I see fit."

"So, how long ya been here?"

"Since about two or so. I just been walkin' 'round wonderin' 'bout what's gonna come of this place."

"Mom said that Aunt Joan was sellin' it."

"If she does, I'm buyin' it." His voice was resolute, yet it wavered ever so slightly. "I couldn't stand lettin' some stranger have it who didn't know what it meant. Yep, I'll find a way a purchasin' this old place, e'en if I ha' ta sell my place an' move in here. Wouldn't be so bad."

What about all those old memories, wouldn't they kinda getcha down?"

"They're all good. That's one fine lady in there," he said as a single tear rolled down his bronzed cheek, "and yore mama's got a lot o' it in her."

"Well, she shore ain't been talkin' up a storm lately. I'm startin' to get worried 'bout her."

She's just had a lot on her mind lately." He looked at his watch. "Hey! You better git on and change before yore mama er Aunt Joan tears ya a new one."

"The old one ain't quite broke yet!" I yelled as I hurried on into the house.

Old pictures and faded cross-stitches decorated the walls and flowers had been strewn across every available table in the house. There were violets and roses and tulips and baby's breath and every other flower you can imagine filling every vase and glass left over. I trotted up the carpeted steps as three giggling sisters came ambling down. I made a turn at the top of the stairs and opened the large oak door to Uncle Tom's old room. The pinstriped wallpaper was littered with posters and old sports memorabilia. I walked in and closed the door behind me. I laid my black garment bag onto the bed and sat down. I sighed heavily. The whole house seemed filled with the sadness of ages and I couldn't help but be weighed down. I walked across the room and opened the door to the bathroom. The blue and white motif seemed soothing. I suddenly became aware of the stench of desiccated sweat on myself. It was sickening. I quickly undressed and showered, furiously

attempting to cleanse myself of the stench. I got out of the shower and dried myself with the towel on the rack. Then, I noticed something. I flipped the towel over only to find a large, hand-embroidered monogram on it. Memories flooded my mind and I was sent reeling to the floor, as I was powerless to stop the flow of tears.

After a time, I regained composure and wiped my face. I had to be the strong one. Mom couldn't be the strong one any longer; it was going to tear her apart, if it hadn't already. I finished drying off and went back into the bedroom.

I opened the bag and pulled out my suit. The black and white seemed to fit the mood nicely and I changed slowly. I put on my shirt first, followed by my pants and belt. I grabbed my tie and walked over to the mirror. I flipped up my collar and began to knot the fabric as I noticed a photo shoved into the siding of the mirror. It was an old photo of the family, when my mom was small. She was smiling. I missed her smiles. I began to well up again, and bit my lips in hope of stopping the "proper emotional response", as Aunt Beth would call it. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. I wiped my eyes and sniffed as I spoke.

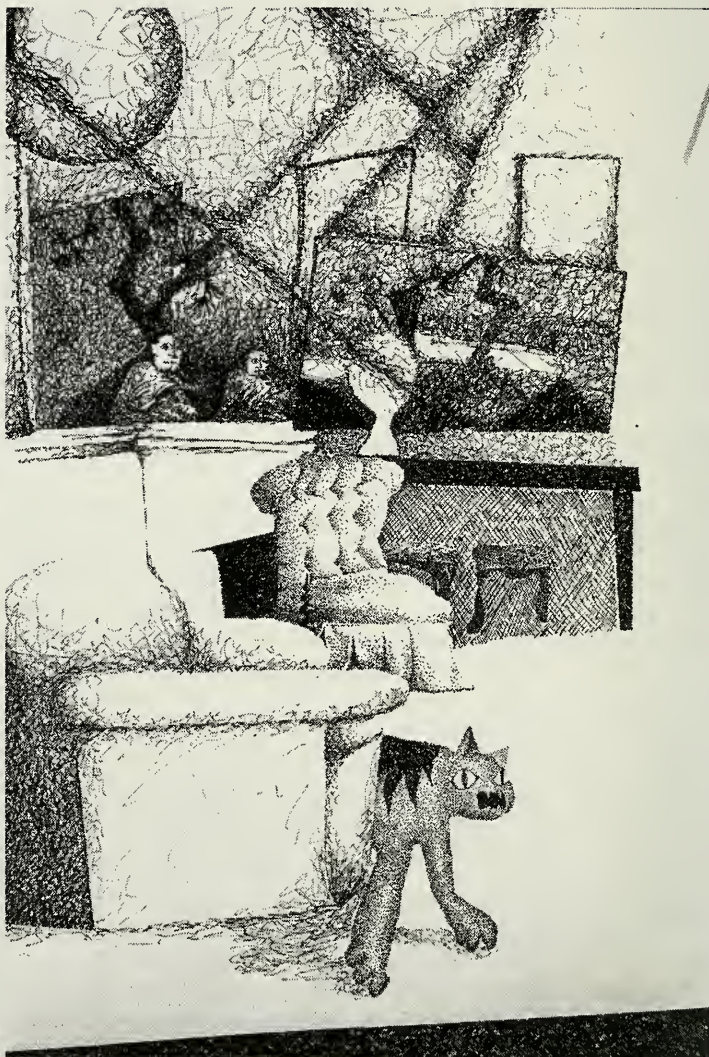
"Come in." My voice was shaky and I cleared my throat. My mother opened the door, somber as before. "Ready?" She asked. I turned to the mirror once again and finished knotting my tie. My mother came behind me with my jacket and put it on me without my turning around. "There," she said as she brushed her hands across my shoulders, "very smart." I straightened my coat and turned to leave the room. I walked quickly out the door and was turning down the stairs before I noticed that my mother was not with me. I retraced my steps and found her still in the room, standing before the mirror. She had a small piece of paper in her hand that I realized, as I inched closer, was the photo from the mirror. She gazed intently at the photo, as if trying to recall that day so long ago. I looked into her face, and a small tear fell from her cheek and landed on the old worn photograph. But this tear was different from any other that she had shed today. Suddenly, a broad smile swept her face and she began one of her silly little laughs, which was soon choked back by the memories. She wiped her face with one hand while never losing the picture from her grasp and turned to me. "We'll always have the good times won't we?" "Yes." I said, it was all that I had sense to utter. She subdued her girlish grin and came over to me and put her arm around me. I gave her a little hug as I put my arm around her waist and we walked together down the stairs and into the parlor. We walked past the rows of chairs slowly filling with guests and to the large oak casket at the front. She gave the photo in her hand the gentlest of kisses and placed it among the flowers.

We turned and took our seats as the ceremony began, with the faintest of smiles spread across our faces.

*Steven Byrd  
Dorman High School  
Mr. Steve Smith*

*Honorable Mention Art*

**Untitled**



*Tim Foster  
Dorman High School  
David Benson*

## **The Train of My Aunt's Wedding Dress**

At first, it measured  
one hundred feet of satin  
tinted the color of infant formula.  
In the bridal room, she stood inside  
the gown's casing,  
her arms and stomach dripping  
from the ardor  
of pulling it around.  
But later, she floated  
down the aisle,  
carrying on the train  
sour-frosted candies;  
milori green silk scarves;  
a tiny rhinestone clip she'd  
always wanted to send  
to the Queen;  
eighteen carbon-copied parking tickets;  
trifling black feathers  
descending from a starling;  
a half-opened lobster claw,  
still slick with butter;  
a false birth announcement;  
*bronze moiré* lipstick  
shaped like a crescent  
due to a multitude of kisses;  
tiny apples that could  
fit in her mouth like grapes do,  
slightly puffing her cheeks;  
glossy hand bells that pealed a low 'A';  
twelve black keys from  
a burned piano that crackled  
a sonatina as it died;  
a glass of warm salty water  
(more liquid than mineral)

to soothe the throat ulcers  
she gets during winter;  
a painting of a pregnant woman from 1802  
gazing at her own huge belly;  
a book of Yeats' poetry  
with pages marked by weekday comic strips;  
the pads of her first lover's fingers  
because he wouldn't give her  
his hands;  
the warmth of her skin  
when she blushes—  
a beautiful red cloud in a jar;  
a shovel's metal tongue full of wet dirt  
to comfort the plucked flower petals  
that the little girls were tossing like  
fertilizer down the aisle;  
and a paper bag with some quarters  
and licorice in case she later decided  
that this man had become suddenly  
too unfamiliar, scary,  
someone that would make her throw up  
if she had to smell his body every night.  
But my aunt did not run from him,  
she cascaded *with* him  
down the church's stairs,  
the train following behind,  
objects thrown off as if by  
poor magic.

She kept the long cloth folded  
inside a closet, but soon  
it began to spill out  
from underneath the door,  
as if the cream was eating  
its own sweet froth.  
The train took over the house,  
and people arrived from as  
far as the Solomon Islands,  
imagining that if they rubbed

their faces with silk,  
eternal youth  
would pull their skin tight  
sweeping a lovely pink  
across their flesh.  
But the bride would not let  
anyone touch it.  
She locked the endless material  
in a building with crystal walls  
they set up next door,  
a spectacle for lines of  
tourists hoping the train  
would burst  
the bright transparency, and  
receive them into its body.

And my uncle?  
He ripped tickets  
apart for hours.  
No one asked him  
how he felt, but  
if they had, he wouldn't even  
have been able to explain  
how every night he dreamed  
himself alone at the bottom  
of an infinite skein of  
twisting silk,  
unable to ascend.

*Kelly Wright  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

*Honorable Mention Poetry*

**20/20**

Phone rings, 3 a.m.  
God, I really hate it  
When you do this to me;  
Going on and on about eternal love—  
You, me, on and on and on.  
I drown out,  
Blink my eyes;  
A vision comes to mind.  
Us in a trailer park  
Living in Mayberry, Together,  
or maybe Iowa.  
The dedicated underachiever  
And his swollen bride.  
Finally you fall asleep  
And I hang up.  
We won't talk again for another month.  
I'm left awake, annoyed and alone;  
But I'll never mention it  
And you won't remember you called.

*Katie McWhorter  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

**Poetry**  
**Fiction**  
**Art**  
**2002**

# I Write Poetry

I write poetry  
Cause it's a part of me  
Like rhymes to Nas  
Or Jay-z the God  
Or the heart beat of a clock  
That goes tic tock in  
A Rolex watch  
Or a snitch in the bathroom  
Calling the cops  
Or like Mutumbo when you  
Come to the hole you know  
It's getting blocked  
Or semi autos you know  
They getting shot  
See what I mean man DAMN!  
I can't stop  
Like getting hit by rain drops  
When you forgot your umbrella  
See what I'm trying to tell ya  
The flow just comes to me naturally  
Like babies and pee-pee  
Or thuggin records out like Mobb Deep  
It just comes to me like dead people and sleep  
Or a tom peeper trying to peep I can't go to sleep  
I'm so impressed by my rhyme style its so unique MAN!  
I knock myself off my feet.

*Alfred Clowney  
Spartanburg High School  
Edwin Epps*

# Drum

Hollow, cylindrical, skin-covered,  
notorious for  
giving reason to placate  
disgruntled neighbors.

No discord--  
monotonous droning  
or bludgeoned cacophonies,  
No...

Only lilting rhythms  
played by dexterous hands  
resonate through its body.

The vibrations dance  
merrily inside the ear.

On the wings of sound,  
the dancers move  
like birds through the air.

The quintessence  
of primal percussion.

The Drum.

*Caryn Kesler  
Spartanburg Day School  
Barbara Cobb*

## The Pen of Life

This pen of mine, I've kept it near;  
Since my birth it has been here.  
I once was young, my pen was full,  
But now it's running dry, I fear.

I see it grow, by and by,  
A bit more empty year by year,  
A bit more empty, and I fear  
Someday it surely must run dry.

This pen of mine I must, I know,  
Use every day, for write or no  
It depletes, the ink does go;  
If it I waste, what can I show?

And so I vow to waste no time  
In capturing the world I see  
In poem and song, a poet I'll be;  
With pen and page the world is mine.

Tell me tree, how do you stand  
On the ground and yet so high,  
With arms that pierce the bluest sky;  
Shall I ever understand?

Tell me sun, why do you shine  
Upon the earth your light of day  
And come to chase the night away;  
Your warming presence feels so kind.

My eyes, my window to the soul,  
Deceive me not, always be true;  
O so much I ask of you,  
Show me the world from pole to pole.

With pen in hand and thoughts inside  
I will write until my end,  
Then leave behind my only friend  
The pen, completely dry.

*Tim Rankin  
Southside High School  
Phyllis Grubbs*

## **An Endless Stream**

Poetry is an endless stream.  
It overflows with ideas.  
It is infinite.  
There comes a point where the stream will merge.  
Which way will you go?  
Take the way your heart and mind lead you.  
Do not be overcome by stones and pebbles.  
They are merely minor obstacles.  
Sometimes the stream will be calm and easy going.  
Other times the ride may be a little bumpy.  
Do not get discouraged.  
Try to take control.  
Listen to the stream.  
Take a deep breath.  
Just write.

*Bailey Hinson  
Riverside High School  
Ms. McKeithan*

## Dress-Up Trunk

A blue cardboard trunk.  
That's all it was.  
I see that now.  
But through the filmy haze  
Of childhood  
Cardboard becomes leather;  
Paint becomes sturdy straps;  
And the painted stickers  
Of places I've never heard of  
Become places I know.  
The glimpse of glitter  
Challenges me to throw open the lid  
A Kaleidoscope of colors greets me.  
A Cinderella crown sits in the corner  
The bright tulle of a tutu keeps it company.  
Bright pink feathers lie curled  
Atop a gossamer blue skirt  
So many colors  
So many hours  
So many dreams.

*Sarah Swofford  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

# Shay



*Amy Coleman  
Broome High School  
Louis Story*

# Stogie

*for Groucho Marx*

I protruded from his mouth  
Like a mocking  
Finger.

He would insult and I  
Would point—  
A devastating team.

I always knew  
The moustache was painted on.  
I would watch from my leather  
Sleeping bag as he did it.

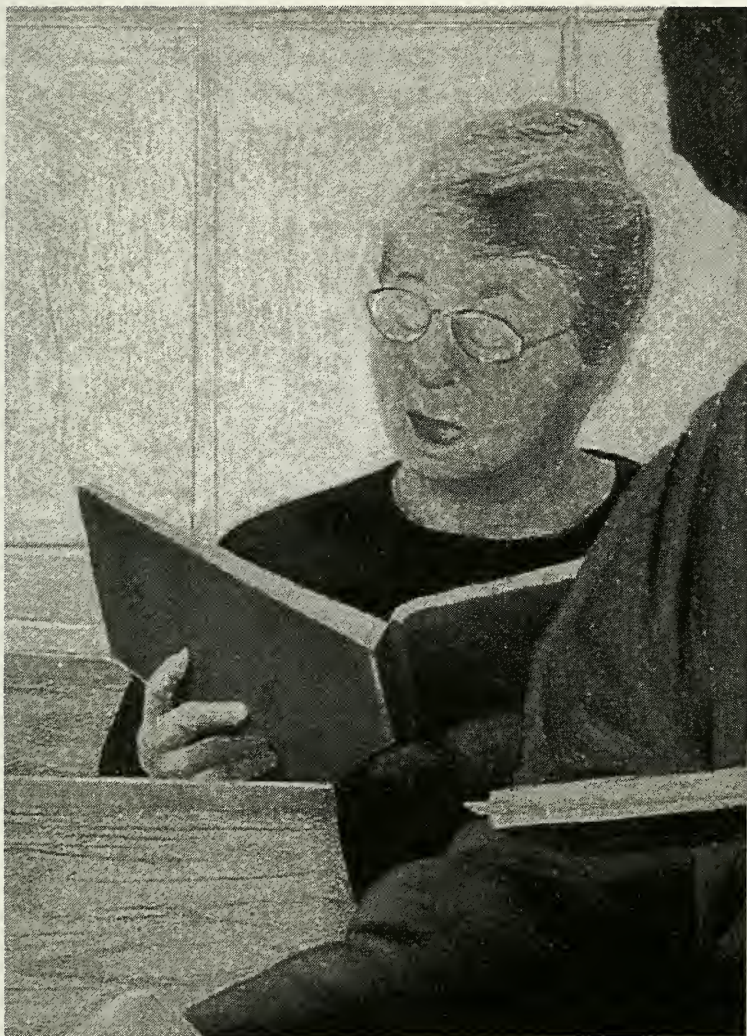
He never lit me, because  
Who would burn their  
Partner?  
He always  
Remembered  
To turn his head  
To point me at all  
His objects of ridicule,  
Everyone.

The heavier his wisecracks  
Grew, the more he waved  
Me through the air.  
I always pointed back at  
Him equally.

When he died, years after  
His brothers, they found  
Me in the hall closet,  
Mildewed with his salvia.  
They gagged and threw me  
Away--  
The thanks I get for working  
My fingers to the bone.

*Hamp Markel  
Fine Arts Center  
Clare Bateman*

# Untitled



*Emory Cash*  
*Spartanburg High School*  
*John Dennis*

## My Senior Year: Free at Last

Drowning fast in the waves of paper, essays, and last minute projects,  
Slowly floating in a long and dreary river of novels,  
I continue on my journey through the raft of education,

Freezing sensations of falling sines and cosines circulate in a whirl of thought,  
Frost biting test with formulas and equations send chills through the brain,  
Another semester of breezy days fill my weeks with frigid hours of knowledge,

Steaming phrases of different languages leave my mind dry and flaky,  
Struggling to find the lake of memory to quench the thirst of forgetfulness,  
Still striving to reach my painful voyage to the end,

A quiet rain of proud praises glisten from every direction,  
The brightness of my smile gleams through as I walk across the stage,  
Rays of happiness shine from everyone's faces as I move towards the front,  
I pause with excitement to receive my paper from years of achievement,  
At last my journey has ended.

*Chianti Lomax  
J.L. Mann Academy  
Lisa Williams*

# The Image

Loading film,  
Blending into the background,  
I look for the moment,  
That moment of joy  
To freeze in time --

Flash!

Dark room  
Anxious fingers --  
Has the moment been remembered  
Immediacy is what I need  
Calm  
Expectant fingers  
Develop  
Cautious Care --

The trusting, timid sheets undergoes change -  
Layers of light -  
Sensitive silver salts  
The duplication  
Of the captive smile.

I smile in return;  
Exposure  
Has enhanced  
Not destroyed  
Expectation --

Perhaps another will see what I see,  
Feel what I felt  
I feel.

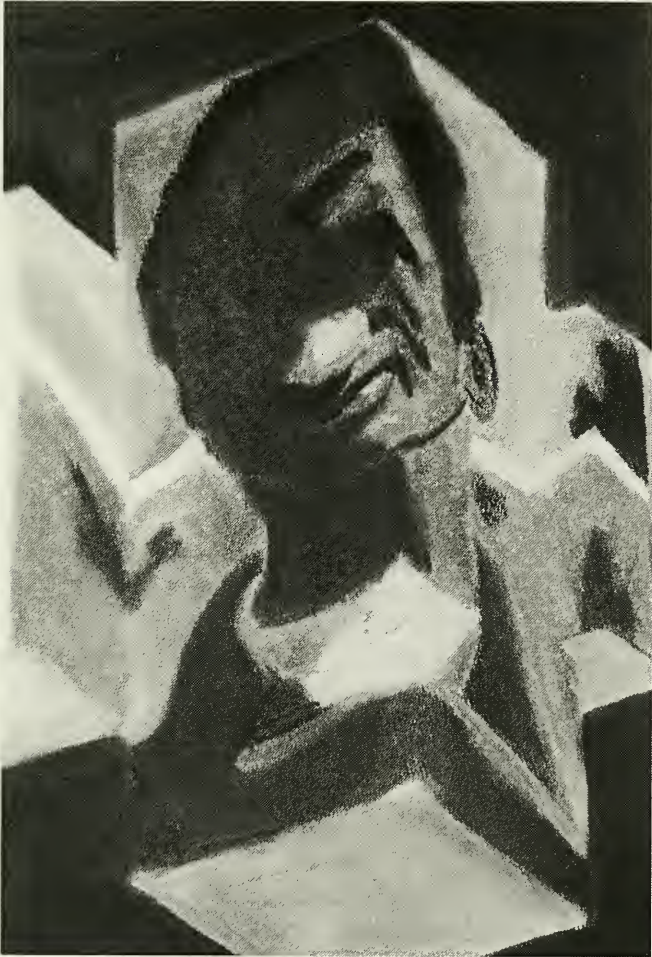
*Merianna Neely  
Spartanburg Day School  
Barbara Cobb*

# Maple Leaf Rag

The ghost of Miles Davis  
rises like a hornet  
toward the moon  
smiling salvation  
buzzing like a broken  
music box  
groping through his  
repertoire to find  
those three elusive bars  
from Joplin's Maple Leaf  
Rag  
up to that height  
where the air is so  
thin  
that it takes  
a rusty saxophone  
to breathe  
where the clouds hang  
thick as concrete  
where the sun  
becomes a vacuum  
sucking notes  
right off the page—  
A trumpeter on Main Street  
pauses in mid-song  
tapping his foot  
in time with  
nothing  
trying to recall  
those first three bars  
that left with  
Miles Davis

*Dave Brothers  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

# Untitled



*Hunter Ragone  
Spartanburg Day School  
Nancy Corbin*

## Interior Design

John Lennon's hell is so much more real than reality was:  
porcelain-covered people, skin-flesh toilets.  
My own hell isn't even decorated.

Well,  
wishing I was a throwback.  
with paisley maybe,

Then I too could be leaving well enough alone.  
He laughs at loud pink furniture, and carpeted people;  
they're like lust: a velvet tunnel,  
similar mostly to the navel of my dog,  
small and brown,  
who died last month, eighteen.

So everything goes, sooner or later,  
I'd like to think I'm more permanent than my imagination  
or other people's imaginations,  
them and their twisted gray tubes,  
like hell, I've heard,  
electrically signifying the end of times with great big blue sparks.

I'd like to think I'm more real than even my own imagination,  
and I try very hard to turn this to my advantage, but something  
somehow  
just won't turn.

As for my insides,  
probably they're plaid.  
I looked down my throat as a child,  
wondering ever afterwards which of my ancestors had married  
Scottish.

My hell is fake—  
more annoying than its stench of death  
is its stench of death's  
disturbing similarity to that of moldy cheese.

My hell is cheap, and can't seem to afford  
the luxury due other, more famous people.

George Burns' hell,  
I've heard,  
makes him think he's still alive.  
I wish I'd been more famous.

Paisley?  
Marilyn Monroe has black marble.

*Jamie Campbell  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## Love Song of the Bass

Like some otherworldly maestro,  
A phantom from the theater depths,

He sings of golden baubles  
Raining from the midnight sky.

With a voice so dark and deep,  
He haunts my heart unceasing.

Forevermore entrapped am I  
By his resounding singing:

This string-ridden, song-bidden  
Hero of my rhapsody.

*Kayla Stachniak  
J.L. Mann Academy High School  
Lisa Williams*

## Sound & Light

I met Apollo on the street of night.  
He approached with silent footsteps,  
in the guise of a homeless wanderer.  
While others walked on by,  
he stood still to hear my drum.  
I quit my hands and opened my eyes,  
beheld his quiet presence—  
his eyes piercing, yellowing with age,  
napped hair creeping gray at the edge,  
and the deepest ebony skin.  
His wise wrinkles gathered up  
as he smiled and extended his hand,  
his three-fingered shake  
telling the healing power of music.  
He spoke verbatim the words in my song.  
He mentioned the great congueros,  
masters of rhythm and sound,  
speaking victory and defeat—  
a common voice for the world.  
In my voice he heard their own.

He said, "Whether we be Haitian,  
African, Cuban, or white;  
music is our common bond."

He asked me to reply.  
My hands wept for him  
the tears of a newborn Christian.

That night, a great blues master  
brought me closer  
to the lover's heart I'd missed.

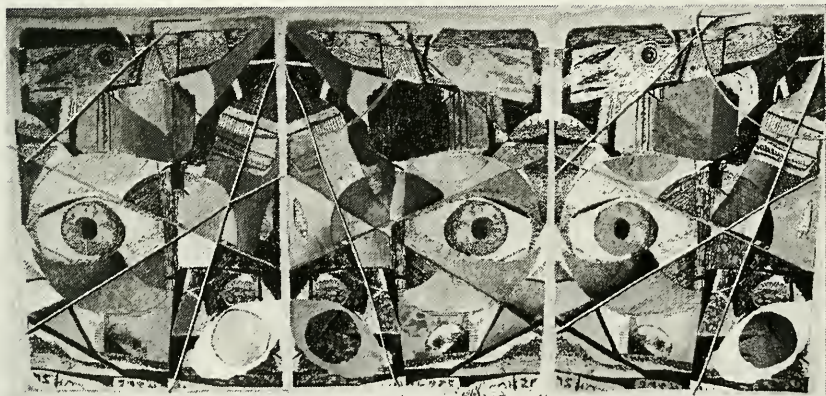
Apollo dances wildly on every musical stage.  
He thrives on the anticoagulant quality of sound.  
His wounded hand heals,

blood flowing  
like the river Ganges.

In a dream he dances  
to the feet of Zeus,  
demanding his rightful throne.

*Drew Phillips  
Fine Art Center  
Claire Bateman*

## Eye For An Eye



*Vanessa Martinez  
Dorman High School  
David Benson*

*A Near Miss 59*

# One Last Drop

They say

Poetry Is Emotion Poured Onto Paper

My cup is empty right now—

I tipped it over and

one

last

drop

PLOPPED  
onto this page.

Do we get free refills?

You know how I like mine

with cream  
and lots of sugar

*Beth Murff*  
*Boiling Springs High School*  
*Kay Hames*

# The Performance

The curtains open  
I look down at my shoes  
I know what's coming  
And I hear the beat  
I see the crowd  
And I hear their roar  
I put up my horn  
To play my dreams,

"What if I mess up!"  
"What if I can't play!"  
Thinking like that  
Can't help me now  
So I lock it away

I play the first note  
And emotion flows  
The notes just come  
The anxiety goes

The ecstasy of music  
Overflows the room  
My sound touches  
Every heart and mind  
I don't want to stop now  
But it's got to somehow

The beat fades out  
And I stop the flow  
All I want to know  
Is when can I get  
That feeling back

But not to worry  
It's not gone  
It's just on hold

*Matthew Miller  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

# Hamlet

To be, or not to be...that's a stupid question. You know, this Shakespeare guy is really overrated sometimes-at least that's my opinion. Hi, I'm Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and the best actor in history! No, I'm not being vain; whom do you know that can convince their family, friends, and the entire country that they're raving mad when, in reality, they're totally sane? Although I admit, it really doesn't take much to fool these people. Why do it, you ask? Well, look at my situation. My uncle poisons my dad through the *ear* (yes, you hard right, the *ear*), then marries my mother (I don't even wanna go there) and proclaims himself king. After my dad's ghost told me about this, I told my friend Horatio that I was gonna act crazy for a while, to see how they'd react to it and keep them off my case while I planned revenge.

Dear old Uncle Claudius isn't exactly the brightest guy in the world either. He ate up my madness act and fell into every trap I set up for him, practically admitting that he committed the deed (especially during the play). When he finally figures out that he can't solve the situation by himself (took him long enough), he sends Rosencrantz and Guildensturn as his little "spies" to hang out with me so they can gain information on my sanity and find out how much I know about the murder (which is everything). These fools couldn't find information on jack. "Naw man, we're not spying on you for the king, we're just going everywhere you go and asking all these questions because we're 'cool with you like that.'" Yeah, that's it, even though we never previously had a real conversation *in the entire time we've known each other!* You'd figure that when they came back with nothing other than "yep, he's mad alright," Claudius would realize how worthless they really are and appoint somebody *worthwhile*. But then he sends the *same two* out to kill me! Come on now, if they can't have a conversation with me without making it obvious, how the heck are they gonna hide that?

But that's not my only problem. I've got this girl named Ophelia. She's beautiful and sweet, and I love her to death, but she takes things too personally. I say, "get thee to a nunnery," and just like that, she starts talking in song and throws herself in the river. Sweetheart, I was kidding-you know-like I do *all* the time? Yeah, I did kill her father...but it's not like I *planned* to do that. If Polonius didn't have to be the big hero all the time, things like that wouldn't happen. What was he going to do, anyway? "Hark! Someone's attacking the queen! I think I'll beat them with my cane!" And by the way, that old man (God rest his soul) was the most *annoying* person on the face of

the earth! "Brevity is the soul of wit," yeah that's a load of crap. Try using that proverb yourself, buddy!

Of course, now that they've got me fighting that oaf Laertes, things aren't going quite so well anymore. I know Claudius is gonna fix this thing one way or another, I'm just not sure how yet. Maybe he'll actually get it right this time...or maybe he'll screw it up like always and end up killing more innocent people. Frankly, I don't care anymore. If I die, I die; if I don't, I don't. Either way, it'll make a good story.

*Chris A. Snapp  
Southside High School  
Phyllis Grubbs*

## Life on the Running Board



*Sarah McChesney  
Dorman High School  
David Benson*

*A Near Miss 63*

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And hardworking Tonka® trucks,  
They will always have someplace  
To come home to.

*Jennifer Clamp  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## With a Pocket Full of Change

With a pocket full of change,  
She cries systematically  
As the violinist bows through her hope.

She pays attention to those with no name  
Who will some day end in the same way--  
Shedding a tear  
With a pocket full of change,  
She dies.

With gaping hole in her physiognomy  
Her empty, no-more-life is now dead

Cry with no remorse  
Morale drops when  
A pocket full of change  
Never does  
And life gets tired before the body  
We return and never come again.

*Jeff Human*  
*Landrum High School*  
*Michelle Dover*

## Babel Rebuilt

One day, first man thought he'd build a tower

To reach the great kingdom above;

"This'll be great! We'll reach the Father!"

"We'll soar just as high as He does!"

"Oh no you don't," said the Man Upstairs,

"You people are hardly infallible.

"Why should I let you get in my hair?

"Your idea is just too fanatical."

"To get up here, first climb the moral rungs.

"This imprudence I'll stop in the meantime.

"I'll make you all speak with different tongues

"Then hablaes vos auf Deutsch, French, and Latein.

So he left the people, completely bemused,

For their speech had become all discordant.

Later came men who would kill and destroy

Because their words were different.

Then a distant progeny created anew

A language, streamlined like satin;

With roots from English and the Romance tongues

As well as German and Latin.

It was easy to learn and easy to speak,

And the spelling was no longer tuff,

For the wurd wur pronounced as they looked on the paj;

No weird words like "although" or "rough."

Now spoken bae millyuns across the hole wurld,

Esperanto will nevr wilt.

And wunse the wurld solvs all its problems for gud,

It will trulee bee Babel rebilt.

*Derek Long  
Spartanburg Day School  
Barbara Cobb*

# Untitled

He's Black. She's White.  
His roots are slavery. Hers are slave owners.  
He likes rap- OutKast, JayZ.  
She likes country-Tammy, Emmylou.  
He speaks French. She speaks Spanish.  
He's been to Europe. She's been to Africa.  
He dreams of a girl like his mother.  
She dreams of a guy like her father.  
His Mamma wants him to marry Black.  
Her Daddy wants her to marry White.  
He gave her a pink bear.  
She gave him a yellow duck.  
Both bleed red.  
Both have the need to love and be loved unconditionally.  
Both agree on obedience.  
Both agree that what is meant to be will.  
Both hearts break.  
Both move on.  
Both heal.  
Neither forgets.

*Anna Shaw  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

# I Never Wanted to Leave

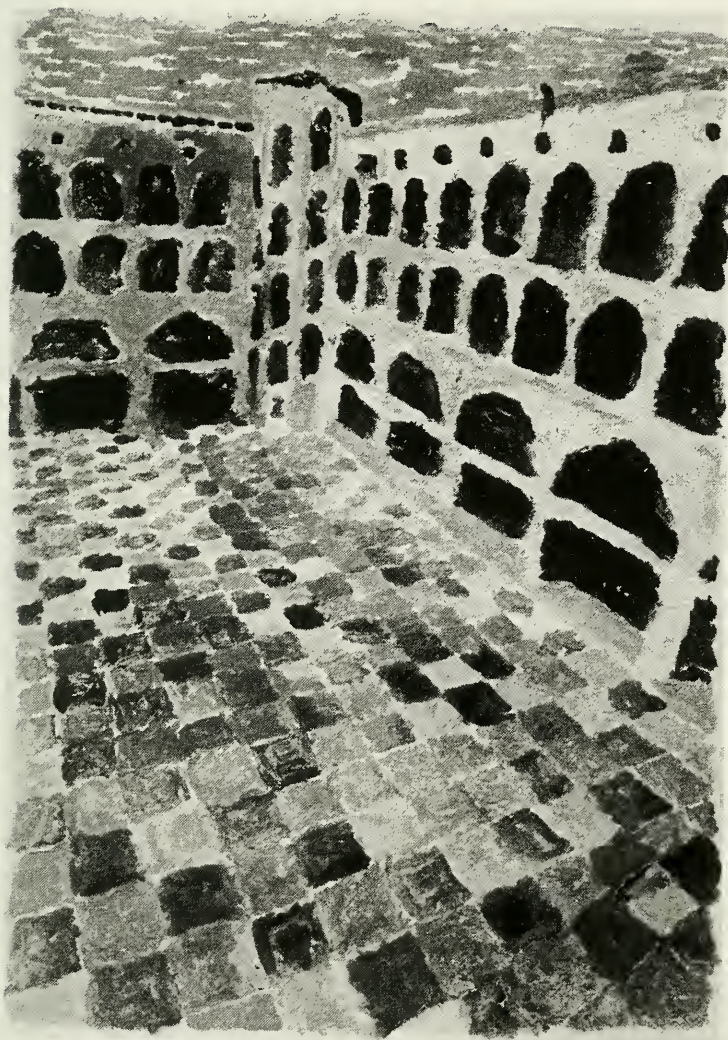
She is what keeps me going.  
Like the dangling carrot,  
Everything I do is in hope that we'll be reunited.  
She is upset with me for leaving her,  
but I never wanted to.

I held on to her with all my might  
but I was dragged away  
and she accused me of not fighting hard enough  
But it wasn't my fault!  
I go into a daze as I remember the walks on 8th avenue,  
The Bronx Zoo, police sirens, and 125th street.

I'll never forget the look on her face  
'cause I stared at her through the car window until she was invisible.  
She turned off her lights and I took a chunk of the apple with me  
It breaks my heart to see her degraded on the news  
I promise I'll be back- I love you  
Please don't be mad at me- New York!

*Gia Hamilton  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

## Monoprint Plaza



*Chris Blassingame  
Woodruff High School  
Diana Olencki*

## Bars of a Bottle

The dark amber sweetness  
slides down like liquid fire.  
Can't remember  
how many he drank,  
when he started,  
or why he started;  
He's in a joyous hide-away.  
like a mouse in his hole  
hiding from the blood thirsty cat,  
he escapes to his bottle,  
evading those who only want to help.  
A fool he looks,  
slurring his words,  
stumbling about his dust-filled room.  
To him his walk is perfect,  
treading the way of his life,  
full of twist and turns;  
so why should he change,  
if life for him does not?  
Deeper and Deeper he goes,  
trapped behind  
the bars of his bottle.

*Kari Edge  
Spartanburg High School  
Edwin Epps*

## Trapped, a Monologue

They took it. Took it all- every bit of it. I sit here naked- naked of my possessions, my dignity, and my freedom- but not my hope.

They grabbed me- threw me in a wagon, stuck me here. They put us in lines: lines to enter, lines to give up possessions, lines to have heads shaved, lines to undress, lines to shower, lines to strip us of any dignity or individuality that may still be left.

I've been pushed down, kicked in the dirt, left to wallow in my despair. But I'm not going to do it. Barbed wire may restrain my body, but there are no restrictions on my soul. I'm a believer, a dreamer. I'll get home, and my mother will be waiting for me with dinner on the table. I can see her deep brown eyes and feel her radiating warmth as she serves the potatoes. My father will tell us about his day at steel factory. He'll watch Joseph and David play happily on the floor. He looks at the toys, the best ones his meager salary can provide. They may be worn and broken, but the boys don't care. It's all the same to them. We will come back together. I'm stronger than this, stronger than them. I can win this battle.

They're calling me now.

They say its time to shower.

*Allison Standard*  
*J.L. Mann Academy*  
*Lisa Williams*

## Counterrevolution

Your Stalin built this wall  
between us,  
keeping East from West  
and me from you;  
I've tried to breach it,  
but it is high and well-guarded  
by attack dogs trained  
somewhere between heart and mind.

Your Stalin lies to us,  
telling us it's better this way,  
that the people like it—  
the people have always liked it—

When this wall falls,  
I'll be there  
to steal a block of it  
and place it  
over my copy of  
Khrushchev's biography.

I'll discover  
an inscription  
chiseled on the surface:  
"Don't think.  
If you think, don't speak.  
If you speak, don't write.  
If you write, don't sign.  
If you think, speak, write, and sign—  
Don't be surprised!"

But I'll keep it anyway,  
because it reminds me  
of your barbed-wire embrace.

*Sara Schneider  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

# What Do You Tell A Child

What do you tell a child that asks “when is daddy coming home?”

You tell her soon, when you know soon is a very long time away.

What do you tell a child that asks is she safe?

You tell her yes, even though you know you can't protect her from everything.

What do you tell a child that asks you, “what is war?”

You tell her something very bad.

Then she asks, “why is Jesus letting war happen?”

What do you tell her then?

What do you tell a child that asks what will her future be like?

You say she will have a great future with lots of money and a pretty house.

You say that even though you don't really know if there will be a future for her to have.

What do you tell a child when she asks will you always be with her?

You say, “of course, baby, I will always be with you,” when you don't really know if you will be together tomorrow.

What do you tell her then?

*Aglaia Kargiatlis  
Chesnee High School  
Faye Howard*

## When You are Old

When you are old,  
remember Me  
remember Me in the sweeping green weeping  
dripping light oh so bright  
clapping leaves of your last summer

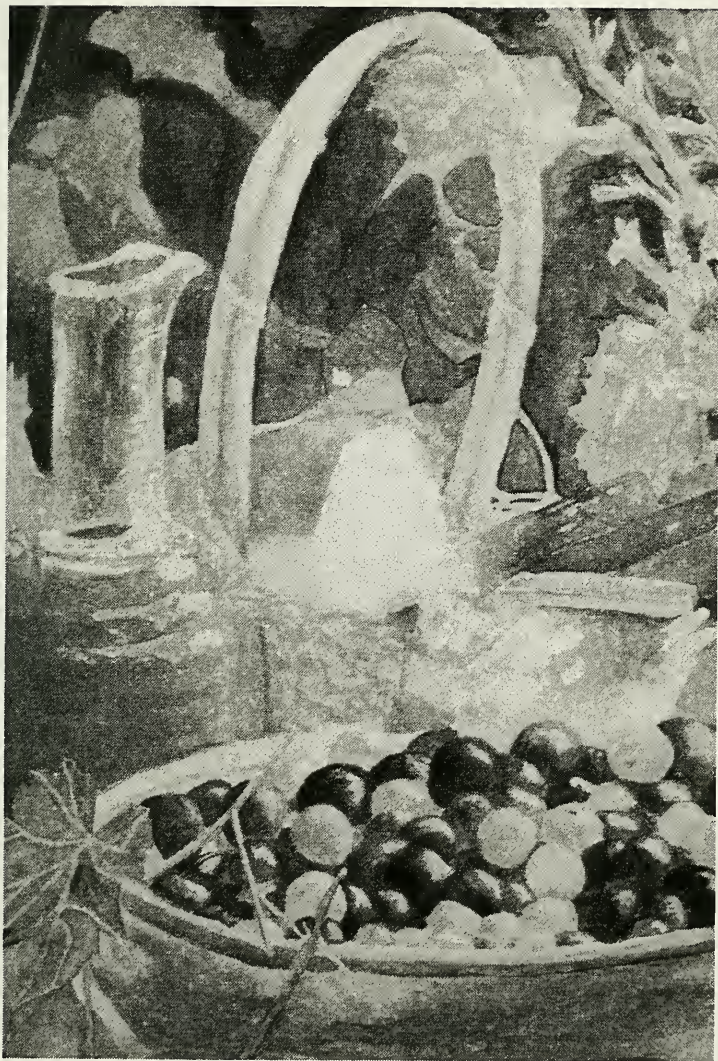
When you are old,  
remember Me  
remember Me in the cascading crispness of  
harvest moon memories in your last autumn

When you are old,  
Remember Me  
Remember Me in the  
crackling cold of wet  
and damp and clammy  
and hushing silent nights of your last winter

And when you are old,  
Remember Me  
Remember Me  
in the glowing, vibrant  
dawn of golden and  
day lilies and  
Remember, child,  
I promised you  
eternal spring.

*Annah Browning  
Chesnee High School  
Faye Howard*

# The Garden



*Mary Anderson  
Broome High School  
Louis Story*

# Whatever

I will not wear my pants too tight,  
It's okay if my hair is not just right,  
I'll sleep alone in my bed at night,  
And I'll be just fine.

Leopard print is not *my* style,  
It's okay to sit and rest a while,  
I won't tape on a big fake smile,  
And I'll be just fine.

My life is not all peaches and cream,  
I'll never be a beauty queen,  
I don't flow in the mainstream,  
But I'll be just fine.

*Lacy Mary Brown  
Boiling Springs High School  
Kay Hames*

## Have you Seen My Friend?

Can't you smell it?  
The stench smothers me.  
his touch is infectious,  
His motion is perfection.  
He knows every button  
And unlocks all the doors.  
His power is in your weakness,  
He delights in your insecurities.  
Your love is His game,  
And your destiny His toy.

*Brandon Leonard  
Woodruff High School  
Kim Dionne*

# The Autobiography of Nobody, Himself

Can you judge me?  
Trust me?  
Believe me?  
Do I look like you?  
Act like you?

Didn't think so.

You ain't even worth  
Wastin' a minute...  
Follow me around.

Did you come from the hood,  
The projects,  
The street?  
Were you found in a dark alley---  
Was your color blue, purple, and black?  
Did you grow up  
Without going all day without a meal--  
At times  
Sleep without a mattress  
On the dirty floor-  
Freezing next to mama  
With only your body heat to keep each  
Other warm?  
See your own brother do drugs and  
Hustle to keep you alive...  
Yeah-

I didn't think so.

*Renee McKinney  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

# Hate

Why are there always issues between  
Blacks and Whites?

Why can't we get along; why must we fight?

None of us asked to be who we are  
But what happens is what happens  
It is not something we can help

Our skin is just skin;  
It's not a secret to be kept

I don't understand people  
Who say they love God,  
But yet they hate

Do they think they'll go to heaven,  
And get past the gate?

So can't we get along?  
Let's stop the fight

God says to love all...

RED  
YELLOW  
BLACK  
and  
WHITE.

*Misty Hensley  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

# Sanctuary



*Teona Clark  
Broome High School  
Louis Story*

# The Bleeder

Today he would try another tactic. Yes, he would. Maybe behind the bushes or under the slide. But hadn't he already tried that? He still endured the same torture everyday. They would find him again, he knew. But maybe he could put it off for a little while. When the recess bell rang, he hid himself as best he could. A few minutes passed and he watched the rest of the children play from his hiding place. The other kids played happily on the playground and he wished he could do the same. Two girls with pigtails played on the merry-go-round and three boys played pirates on the swinging bridge. The little boy sat back against the plastic slide and pushed back the tears that threatened to fall. But a loud shriek brought him out of his thoughts.

"Hey, I found him!" a little girl cried, peeking her head under the slide. The boy was pulled out as a crowd grew quickly. Everyone on the playground surrounded him, wanting to see the latest phenomenon.

"Hurt him!" another boy declared. All the children started pushing him around. The boy fell to the ground, feeling sharp rocks digging into his flesh. The teacher stood across the playground feeling a little helpless. She could never prevent it from happening, but she could do her best to stop it.

The boy was crouching down on the ground when the dirty sneaker made contact with his nose. In a way, it was over, but the little boy knew his life was just beginning. He'd always be like this. He could feel the liquid beginning to slowly creep down his face. The teacher broke up the crowd and stood staring at the boy in both sympathy and fascination. What was today? Wednesday? Yes, it was Wednesday. Today it was violet. Tomorrow it would be robin's egg blue and Friday it would be macaroni and cheese yellow. On Saturday it will be pine green and on Sunday it would be ivory. The scientists wanted the little boy. They wanted to poke and prod and study until they found a reason. But there was none to find. He was the boy without reason.

*Jennifer Clamp  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

# My Mother

My mother  
She works all the time  
At a power plant  
Twelve hours a day.  
To put food on the table for her children.

*Jejuan Ferguson  
Woodruff High School  
Frances Mason*

# Forever

FOREVER IS NOT A PERIOD OF TIME  
BUT A PLACE THAT LIES FAR AWAY  
BATTLES FOUGHT AND WON  
WHERE OLD LIFE ENDED, NEW HAD BEGUN

IT IS WHERE OUR PRESENT GOES  
WHEN IT BECOMES THE PAST  
WITH ALL THOSE PRECIOUS MOMENTS  
WE ONLY WISH COULD LAST

IT IS WHERE OUR FUTURE LIES  
AND ALL THAT'S IN BETWEEN  
FOREVER AND EVER  
FOREVER WILL NEVER BE

*Erin Johnson  
Southside High School  
Ms. Ransome*

## Powder Wings

Packing up her girlish things  
into a worn leathery bag,  
my small sister's sore eyes  
are circled with round rings of black makeup  
With her heavy bags on our shoulders and in our hands  
we leave this one  
I stare at the wall, floor, out to the porch  
a moth smashes blindly into the light  
finally to fall flapping its powder wings on its back,  
I help drag herself and her things away

Black hole men she's leaving again

I wish to be a passerby  
questioning her with eyes

As I drag her bags I stare at her small hand  
placed on her small back  
other hand, on her round belly  
Yet, her arms are robbed of all softness  
marked with fingertip bruises

We pass a crowd of soft curls and white  
smiles in tight jeans  
Their energy makes my throat sick

Nothingness will pass in front of her again; irresistible gravity!  
She becomes destructive once more  
She walks into and back out of the light of the street lamp  
And the moths smash themselves blindly against it

*Kyra Cretella*  
*J.L. Mann Academy*  
*Lisa Williams*

# Betty



*Betty -Ann Bishop  
Spartanburg High School  
Nancy Harrison*

## Disappearing Act

At first, I'm not sure of what I hear.  
Is that vague sound  
the muffled radio or  
her choking sobs?

The water is turned off,  
she blows her nose.  
The silence is more defined now:  
the unclear noise stands out,  
louder than before.

It's her.

I stop writing to listen.  
I can hear her moving around:  
she's putting up her hairbrush,  
shutting the cabinet drawer,  
opening the door.

I don't dare turn to see  
her tear streaked and  
anger red face.

We both act as if we're  
invisible  
as she mopes down the hall to her bedroom,  
closing the door behind her.  
She acts shielded now,  
shut up in her sanctuary.

She doesn't like  
being invisible  
any more than I do.  
But the magic of making ourselves  
invisible to each other is still powerful.  
Being invisible is easier

than admitting the fault  
and taking the blame.  
Slowly, we will start to reappear  
over the next hours, days.

I don't hear her anymore.  
And she's not listening for me.  
We both are safe,  
Safe in the silence of invisibility.

*Anna Webb  
Greenville High Academy  
Bernard Zaidman*

## Courage

He sat in his old leather chair.  
He was weak, but I didn't care.  
I jumped up into his lap.  
He cradled me, as I took a nap.  
When I had to leave, I told him, "Goodbye."  
He looked at me as if he were going to cry.  
There was something I didn't know that day—  
That those were the last words I'd get to say.

*Melanie Thomas  
Blacksburg High School  
Sharon E. Glass*

# I Remember

I remember how it was  
When I was young.  
I was blind and naive  
To the ways of the world  
And I was so content  
To just be myself  
And not worry much  
About one's perception of me.  
How could I have known  
It was all going to change?  
Because it was slow  
And it crept up on me.  
Now I'm not the same  
And I don't take for granted  
Everything I used to be.  
Because when I look back  
I realize what I had  
And that I didn't appreciate it then  
When things were simple  
And life was good  
And I was young  
And now it's gone.

*Suzanne Parker  
Dorman High School  
Steve Smith*

# Equilibrium

If she tried to run,  
she'd drop things,  
a condition inherited from her father.  
Growing up, she watched him hurry,  
dropping his beard,  
a tooth, a footprint—  
not a blunt indentation in the snow,  
but a precise tracing of his shoe's heel,  
brown lines from caked mud.  
Soon even the chance of  
a shudder would unnerve her,  
and she learned  
discipline, suspension.  
Before long, a flat book  
on the crown of her head  
was too easy. She progressed  
to nests weighted with tern's eggs,  
candle cups fragrant with glossy oil,  
slick honeycombs furred with sleeping bees.  
She held her jaw tight  
her teeth wore flat,  
quitting just before she lost one.  
Lost is as bad as dropped, but slower,  
so over ice or mud, she walks  
steady.

*Leah Coakley  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## You Remember

Once, a long time ago, you remember,  
The faded white lines of the curvy, country highway,  
Ascending into the heaven over the russet fields of the harvested bottom-  
land.

Folk tunes, gypsy blues of a lost era playing softly over the roar of the pickup,

Staring at the frosty grass on the mountainside,

Your memory, a repeating record in my mind.

You remember the stories you used to tell,

'Bout the ol' haints of the holler,

The flickerin' glow of the foxfire playin' shadows 'cross your luminous smile,

As you sat in your black chestnut rockin' chair.

You remember sayin' grace 'fore supper,

And everyone crowdin' around the table together,

The meals we ate consisting of freshly picked tomatoes from the garden behind

your white-washed, tin-roofed house,

And cornbread still steamin' from your wood stove.

You remember those long talks after supper

'bout Wilson, Roosevelt,

the Great Depression, and the War,

We'd pull out our instruments and pick an occasional song,

But mostly we'd just talk.

You remember sayin' goodbye,

Every farewell seemin' as the last moment

we'd spend together—a family,

Until at last it was.

Michael Jett  
Broome High School  
June Bowman

# Yesterday

We swung with dangling feet, our golden hair blowing wildly.  
Captured that glowing magic in bright green pickle jars,  
And stayed awake to watch the beaming, wonderous light.

We spent hours on the driveway, creating golden yellow suns and pearly  
pink roses.

Built a palace of wooden chairs and old, wooly, pink blankets,  
And created an amazing world strictly our own.

We toiled over synchronized swimming routines, performing like glittering  
superstars.

Raced down the sparkling pavement on our shiny Joe Cool scooters,  
And giggled about the tingling “bugs” in our feet.

We set the rules for our exclusive two-person club, hiding our code in that  
secret place between the shower curtains.

Sent each other on challenging scavenger hunts with small neon memos,  
and smiled when we found that old pencil as our prize.

You’ve climbed a tree that’s out of my reach.  
Left me here alone,  
And you sit with your feet on the cold, dark floor.

I miss our fun and happy times.  
See something colorful in the mailbox from you,  
And you take me back.

*Allsion Standard*  
*J.L. Mann Academy*  
*Lisa Williams*

## A Sense Of Family

He stood there in black boots, blue jeans, and a Harley Davidson shirt that clung to his gut like gum to the bottom of new shoes, an expression of uncertainty lingering on his face, as he gazed at the shelves of light-bulbs, as if trying to remember which one it was that he needed.

He caught the corner of my eye as I was walking by, the first time I'd seen him in a least a month. I stood at the end of the aisle, unnoticed, not new feeling. He looked horribble, gone astray from the man who would stay home from work when I was sick and sleep with me in the recliner, his heart-beat a soothing pulse to an aching child, the man who drove to the emergency room one afternoon when I was informally introduced to a 5-iron.

I stayed where I was, not speaking, though not abonding him, due to my fear of taking after him, like mom so often says. The rich, dark hair, and sullen eyes always brought the need for comment when anyone saw us together. I noticed the heavy smell of leather and Coors Light that had become characteristic of only him in my mind.

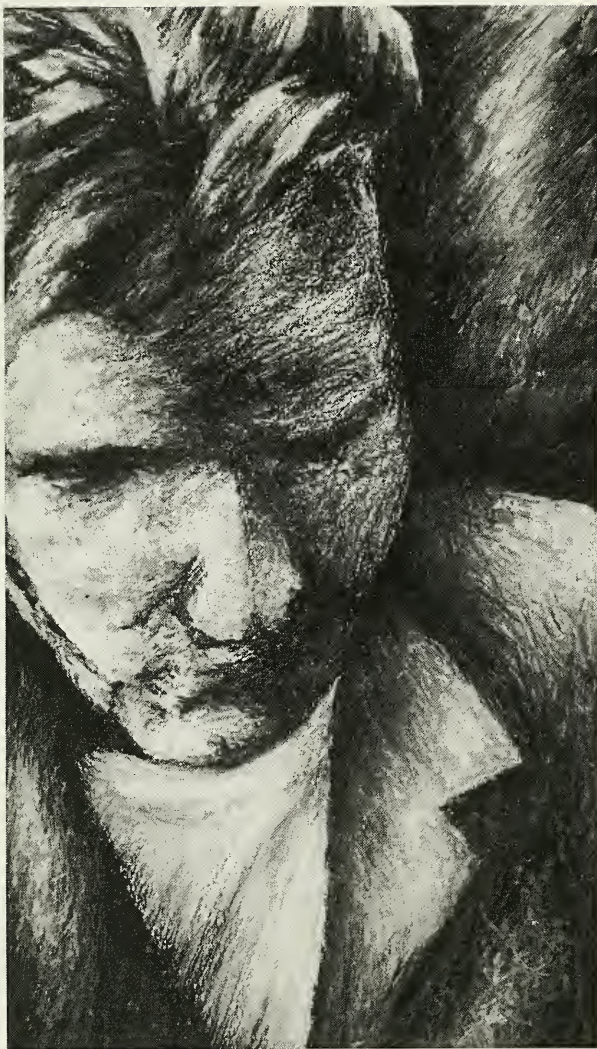
I wondered, as I did on weekends when he seemingly forgot about me, what should be said and done. I would lie on my bed and gaze out the window, constantly waiting on him to call or arrive. As I grew older, I seemingly grew less anxious, and now I wasn't anxious to act on thoughts unsaid, yet reluctant not to say anything, feelings of parental debt still lingering in my mind.

"How much is left of that order? Mr. Downs asked.

"I'm not sure..." I replied, heading towards the stockroom, wondering if it would be the last time I would smell that scent of distress.

*Lance Smith  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

# Elvis



*Emily Smith*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Diana Olencki*

# The Girls In the Magazine

As I look at the girls in the magazine,  
Their frail, fragile, figures flaunted.  
I question whether they are real.  
Their smoky shadowed eyes  
Are like sunken pits on their concave cheeks.  
I wonder what they eat?  
With jagged shoulders and rippling ribs they adorn every ad  
Like dolled up inmates at Auschwitz.  
I'm sure no one finds them attractive.  
And yet, standing in front of a lighted mirror,  
I pinch my thighs and suck in my stomach in vain.  
And before I leave my house,  
I take the smoky shadow and line my  
Eyes and cheeks just so.  
With my scale tipping emulation complete,  
The threads of my self-confidence feel  
As thin as the waif that compels me.  
And as much as I demean the girls in the magazine...  
I wish I were them.

*Erin Foster*  
*Spartanburg High School*  
*Bill Pell*

# Invisible

Her eyes sparkle like sapphires  
But no one sees,  
For she never looks away from the ground.

Her voice is like an angel's  
But no one hears,  
For she lacks the confidence to sing.

Her teeth gleam like pearls  
But no one notices,  
For she hardly ever smiles.

Her grace is like a butterfly's  
But no one admires,  
For she lacks the courage to dance.

Does this child long to be  
Seen, heard, noticed, admired?  
Or is she content to be invisible?

*Laura Simpkins  
Woodruff High School  
Frances Mason*

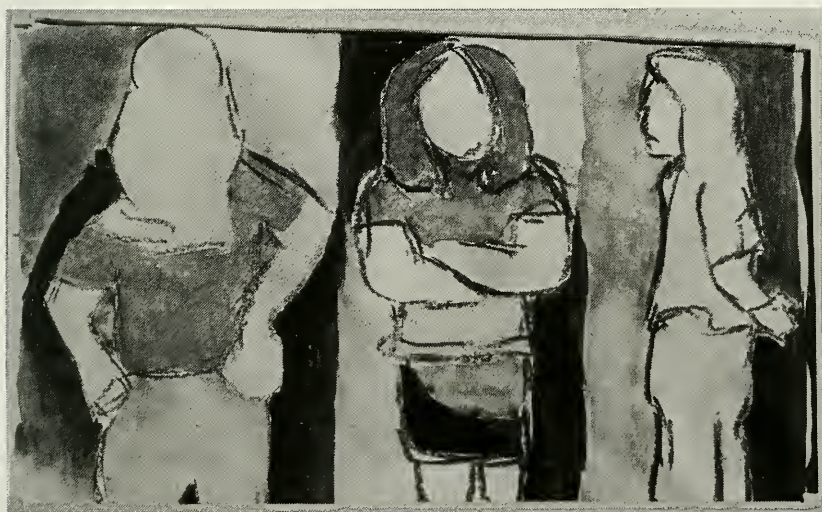
# Jealous

I hate the way your perfect life shows through mine  
Like I exist on a lower level than you;  
I hate the way my dreams are always shattered  
While yours always seem to come true.  
I hate the way everyone always pays attention to you  
Like you're the God they've all been waiting for;  
I hate the way they all shut me out  
And nail my lips to the floor.  
I hate the way you were made so perfect  
Without the slightest imperfection;  
I hate the failure I am  
How I chose the worst possible direction.  
I hate the way you maintain a free soul  
Not letting challenges drag you down;  
I hate the way I'm burying mine  
And how no one cares enough to be around.  
I hate the way you walk in a straight line  
Like you know exactly where you're heading;  
I hate the way my footsteps wander everywhere  
Without a clue as to where they're ending.  
I hate the way you love, like it's so simple  
Like no one would ever break your heart;  
I hate the fact that I can't trust love  
For the way it has torn me apart.  
I hate the way you smile  
How it brightens each new day;  
I hate this frown that is constantly haunting me  
And how I was never showed a different way.  
I hate the way you're always so calm  
Never letting life unravel you;  
I hate the way I'm always unnerved  
By everything people say and do.  
I hate you most of all  
For all you are;  
And I hate myself even more  
Because I haven't gotten that far.

I hate the way I look up to you  
I hate how you never seem to fall;  
I most hate the fact that I don't hate you  
Not a lot,  
Not a little,  
Not at all.

*Chrissy Black*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Kim Dionne*

## Untitled



*Jon Knox Griffin*  
*Spartanburg Day School*  
*Nancy Corbin*

*A Near Miss 95*

## Saturday Night Before the Babysitter Arrives

She climbs into the sink  
in Mama's bathroom  
the black wand she has watched  
her Mama uses goes to her lashes  
the smudges don't matter  
to her.  
With small fingers  
she pats  
pinkish powder  
to her cheekbones  
just like Mama  
then deep purple  
with a bit of pink  
dabbed onto eyelids  
just like Mama  
she pouts her lips  
filling them in with the red twisted tube.  
There are no lines to stay within  
in her mind  
she is just like Mama.

I am sitting still  
in Mama's sink  
waiting  
to become her,  
a grownup.  
Every day I put on makeup  
hoping that today it will make me  
up.  
That day has been long coming  
and I have a feeling  
it is still  
a long way off.  
But at least Mama's makeup  
makes me feel it  
until

the water washes it away  
leaving a little girl sitting  
with her chin on her knees  
watching her  
get ready.

*Rogers Brandt  
Barbara Cobb  
Spartanburg High School*

## Pinocchio

Secret forts for G.I. JOES  
Cow manure between our toes  
Mud splattered all over our clothes  
Man, what a friendship

Sticky stuff from K-5 class  
Making knives out of broken glass  
Passing gas and showing some ass  
Man, what a friendship

Hanging out in our exclusive club  
Butt-naked bathing in the tub  
Crossing swords with our tiny nubs  
Man, what a friendship

*Tim Gentry  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

# Untitled

Looking in the mirror,  
Skimming over every imperfection.  
Wishing each wasn't there;  
That's what we girls do.

We always think that our hair is horrifying,  
Our face so ugly,  
And our bodies so imperportioned and fat.

Why? Why do we think these things?  
Why can't we see how beautiful we really are?  
No one is perfect.

Looking at pictures,  
Thinking how hideous we look.  
"Oh I hate that picture! Look how awful I look!"  
That's what every girl says.

If only you could look like *that* girl,  
You know, the picture perfect one.  
She always looks beautiful in every way.

Would you really change yourself?  
If you could?  
No one is perfect.

I have come to realize something,  
Our imperfections are what give us our beauty.  
To love yourself, you first have to accept everything.  
Its what is on the inside that counts, no make up can cover that.  
Our heart is what people should see, how much we care and how pretty we  
are on the inside.  
Once you see this for yourself, you will be happy and realize the most  
important thing..  
No one is perfect.  
Yet, in my eyes, you are as perfect as prefect as can be.

*Erika Stromberg  
Nell Lucius  
J.L. Mann Academy*

## A Prayer for Forgiveness

Skin is  
Tough.  
For a reason  
She thought she was as well.  
But her strong, confident woman  
Side had slipped away.  
Oh, Snip-Snipidy,  
Clip-clipidy,  
Rip-ripidy.  
What am I doing? She thinks.  
And then, Drip-dripidy.  
Clink! Clank! Clink!  
Dropping the blade in the sink  
in her excitement.  
A rush of adrenaline over-taking  
Her sleep-deprived, shriveled, little body.  
Almost beautiful, She thinks.  
It wasn't so bad, She thinks.  
No pain could she feel  
To equal what she'd caused, She thinks.  
She watched it as She thinks.  
What AM I doing? She thinks.  
At least, I pray She thinks.

*Allie Sansbury  
Spartanburg High School  
Edwin Epps*

## Pulling Iron

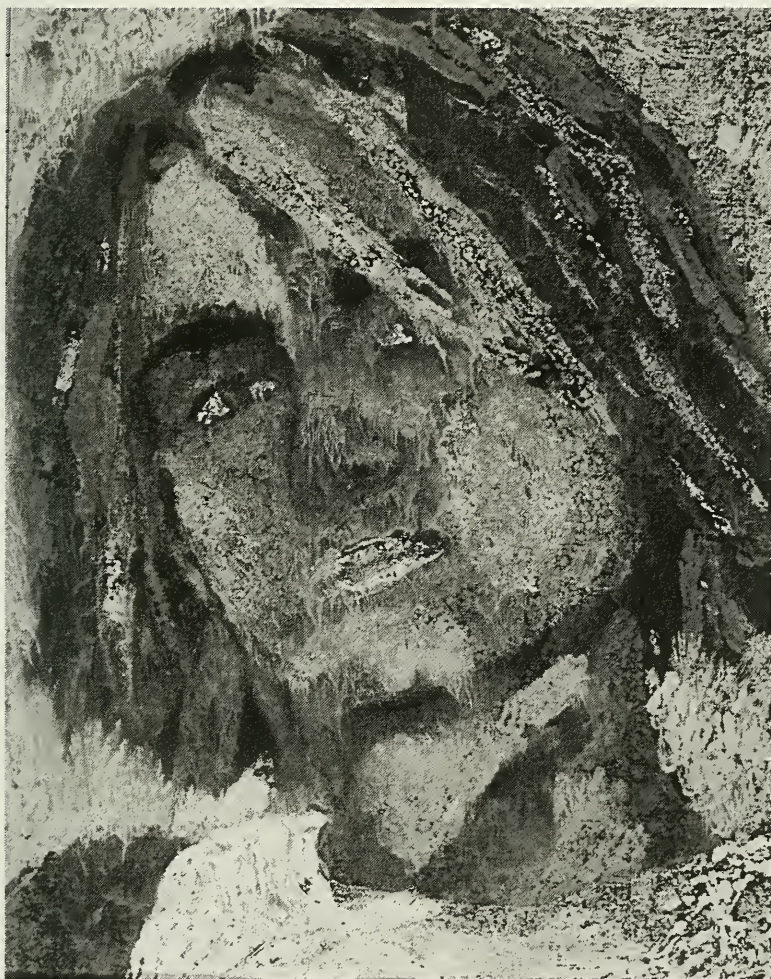
Someone carved her out of wax—  
careless and sharp, all folds and wrinkles  
disappearing like tree roots into  
the open mouth of her blouse.

She watches TV now,  
always in the dark, the blue light  
making jellyfish patterns on  
the wall, her face, her hands;  
the white light catching her wedding ring,  
strung on a chain and gray between her teeth,  
in rapid cat-eye blinks.

Summers now, she melts alone—  
at night, thinks she's floating, rocking  
on the surface of the sea,  
waves like pewter, pulling the moon by its hair.  
But always, she awakens—fingernails, hard  
and the color of ash, clawing for the chain,  
the moon through the lace dotting her  
arm with scars, the ring  
tasting like blood.

*Emily Smith*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Paul Thomas*

# Tara



*Luke Kennedy*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Diana Olencki*

## The Future

We'll all go in different directions,  
mostly in pairs so we won't get lost or cold.  
One of us has decided  
which city, what street, the cost for rent and utilities.  
One says she'll go  
to Vermont or Maine,  
where coldness erupts from the volcanoes of suburban life.  
And the guy in the corner, the one who looks so smart  
is going to Nashville to be a country singer.  
We all know our children's names, our dogs' barks  
the fetishes that'll drive our neighbors crazy.  
We'll drive our father's cars  
and lose our mother's hair.

*Melissa J. Fowler  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## Hurry

I envy the white rabbit.  
He has time enough  
To afford a glance at his watch.

I know only enough  
To realize that  
I don't have such a leisure

*Daniel Duncan  
Greenville High School  
Bernard Zaidman*

## Reflection

Peer in silver.  
Stranger leers back.  
I lay no claim to the  
Masculine grotesque physique  
Which lacks even inner beauty.  
Always pursuing me,  
That haunted following stranger  
Couldn't be me.  
Epiphany, We are one and the same.  
I seek to bash her out of existence,  
Shards of despair and bad luck.  
She is reincarnated in  
Every water pool, metal, and glass.  
Our haunted eyes meet.  
She seems to taunt,  
Finding humor in my inability  
To get away from myself.  
Ugly ducklings never bloom,  
They drown  
From which blossoms up weeds and rot  
Like wildfire kudzu.  
Medusa has peered into her own eyes  
And turned to stone,  
Yet still paints herself  
While frozen and lifeless.  
Mannequin.

*Heather Barton  
Landrum High School  
Michelle Dover*

## Fear

Knock-kneed, twisted tongued,  
Lost in worried confusion,  
Standing silently still,  
Consumed by nervous tension.

Trepidly trembling, while fixing its gaze,  
Faltering...fumbling for phrases,  
Dismay shows in so many ways.

While the face wilts to snowy white,  
With watery droplets weltering,  
The cold of cowardice consuming

Quietly crouching in the crowded nothingness,  
Silent shrieks submerge  
The quietude quickly quails to quivers.

Defiance drastic dissolves to diffidence,  
Shyly shrinking so as to shield  
Rejection reigns unreputed among the rest.

Flee? Fight? Freeze?  
Desperately seeking a reply,  
Wanting to fight, choosing to fly.

*Cecily Boggs  
Spartanburg Day School  
Barbara Cobb*

# Breaking Point

Your chipped teeth talk to me  
about when you were eleven,  
still a tomboy not used to makeup.  
They divulge how each perfect stroke  
of Burnt Tangerine polish seemed to radiate  
from the toenails of your friends  
as you tripped over them  
in the aqua bathroom whose shower curtain  
shimmered with ocean scenes  
(those fish still remember too).  
Your teeth heard the giggling of the girls  
standing in the cramped room,  
then the short gasps that followed  
when your mouth made contact,  
closing just a little too late to protect itself.  
They seemed to echo the sound  
their missing parts made hitting the floor,  
a sound you pretend you've never heard  
or have forgotten.  
Your teeth tells me how it feels  
to fall in a ceramic tub,  
what shade of red pours  
from the pink of your mouth.  
Your fingers would later marvel  
at how tight and surprisingly dry  
the little pieces of your gums felt  
as you picked them up slowly,  
as if testing the heat of bath water.  
Your chipped teeth tell me what it is  
to be broken.

*Christian Pruitt  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

# I Am Hidden

My face is shadowed  
By generalities and assumptions  
My soul runs, fleeing  
From a world unknown, that seems to  
    know it.  
My freckles are me as a child,  
My eyes – my soul.  
I touch you, whether you feel me'  
    or are numb.  
I reach inside you, trying  
To find a shelter of humanity.  
Rather than judgmental hell.  
To you I am just an odd girl,  
Someone with problems who seems  
To find solitude in pen and paper.  
You can't possibly know me, you  
May know my reputation, my  
Outer voice, my appearance, and  
Other vain and unimportant details  
Such as these, but you can't possibly  
know me, because these details hide  
Me. They are my refuge, I am  
a turtle in a shell, the sun behind a  
Cloud, a frog beneath a lily pad.  
To you – I am empty, meaningless.  
If you only had one single clue,  
Any clue to let you know that I am  
So much more. My soul is lava  
In a volcano, awaiting the emotional  
Breakdown, allowing it to erupt.  
My heart is cold and mute,  
Unable to express itself without motion.  
My face distorts to smile, frown, grimace  
But it never reveals what my heart feels.  
Outside, I am a young woman

Confident and ready to take on the  
World. Inside, I am a child, lost without  
It's mother's hand. Endlessly  
Searching for a shred, an ounce of comfort.  
You don't know me. Your assumptions  
Conceal who I really am. My fear of  
False impressions cause me to scurry  
Away. My soul screams for help.  
I remain hidden.

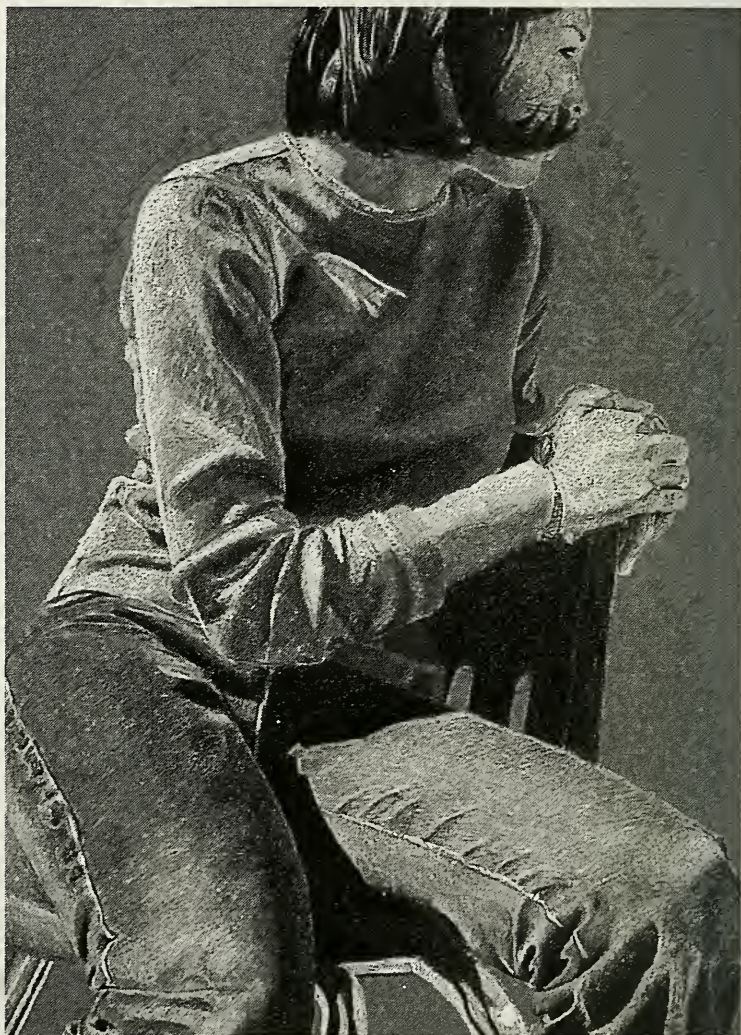
*Sarah Kinney  
Dorman High School  
Steve Smith*

## **Late Night Stomach Ache**

Creeping into the bathroom  
with sticky thighs,  
She removes white cotton panties:  
Deep red liquid races down her leg  
As she stands there nude—  
Apple breasts,  
Small tufts of hair.  
The beauty of a woman,  
The confusion of a child.

*Ashlee Goforth  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## Figuratively Speaking



*Caitlin McDonald*  
*Dorman High School*  
*Susan West*

# Roots

What am I, who am I, where do I belong  
Why do I look this way  
No I am not ebony nor ivory nor caramel  
Instead a mixture of roots came together  
To form who I am

My roots have  
Eyes bluer than the horizon  
Some blacker than coal  
Others green like the rain forests  
Skin as white as snowflakes  
And skin brown like pecans and almonds  
Golden locks and copper waves and  
Black curls  
Some lips are plump like cherries some are  
Lines across the face

Yes, these are roots that claim me  
Roots of passion and endurance  
Class and intelligence  
Wisdom and affluence  
Strong hands, dashing feet  
Servitude yet also royalty  
The world may distinguish colors or creeds  
But these colors and creeds joined together  
To define who I am

*Mayra Gonzalez  
Dorman High School  
Steve Smith*

## Imitation

once, she had wanted to scrub away her face  
get rid of that bright lipstick slash  
that swallowed lies  
through a candlelight dinner for two.  
she had wanted to leave that moon face blank, let  
someone  
color in those somber gray eyes with blue.

she nursed a martini all night long until  
he guided her into the veranda and  
fed her buttercream and Broadway  
that she bit gently off his sculptor's fingers.  
she stood quietly, eyes down as he peeled off  
her worn jeans, revealing  
the raw blue of her he painted over with orange and aqua  
to set her on canvas.

she touched the mark he left,  
a minute thumbprint on her collar  
she can't brush away without him  
so she sits on 54th Street, another mannequin  
in another store window.

*Jingyi Zhang  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

## Outcast

They don't even know me;  
They don't even want to know me.  
They don't even know me,  
But they know they don't like me.

They don't know me when someone asks,  
But they know me when they want something.  
They don't know me when someone asks,  
But they know me when they're alone.

I know them;  
I know all of them.  
I know them.  
I know everything about them.

They know I know them.  
They want me to.  
They know I know them,  
But they don't know me.

*Amy McCraw  
Spartanburg High School  
Edwin Epps*

# Definition of Seventeen-year-old Girl

The object of poetry seems to be to express oneself.  
Reveal your unconscious thoughts,  
if you happen to have some of your own.

Express me.  
And who might that be?  
I am seventeen.  
I am a girl.

I don't have a boyfriend—but I should.  
At the same time, I should be independent.  
I should know how to cook, clean and sew,  
but I should also get four degrees.  
Homemakers are under-achievers.

I should have a 1600 SAT, a 4.867 GPA  
and scholarship offers from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.  
I should give the speech at graduation.  
But I should not let this get in the way of my social life.  
I should enjoy my senior year.

I should twirl the mascara wand against my  
eyelashes exactly 17.3 times to get that  
noticeable-but-not-made-up look.

I should stand up for what I believe in,  
as long as no one disagrees with me.

I should party on Saturday night and go to church on Sunday.

So who am I, really?

I am told to write from who I am.  
But I'm scared that if I do that,  
Someone might not like it.  
And what if I find out that I don't know yet?

*Rebecca Steadings  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

# Only Me

Does anyone know the real me  
Different masks for different scenes  
Make up that covers all  
From the good to the obscene  
Song and dance that I must do  
To look good and make it through

But what happens when the lights turn out  
And no one is there to cheer and shout  
I must strip everything down  
Until there is nothing around  
Will there be anyone who wants to see  
Just me

*Chris Rice  
Greenville High School  
Bernard Zaidman*

## Self Portrait



*Jared Smith  
Wade Hampton High School  
Patricia Crandall*

# To be...

To be...

To be born

To be dead

To be alone

To be crowded

To be scared

To be brave

To be silent

To be loud

To be hungry

To be satisfied

To be accepted

To be rejected

**To be human...**

*Davietta Downs*  
*J.L. Mann Academy*  
*Lisa Williams*

# Memory

Alice remembered  
with golden nostalgia  
her idealistic adolescence.  
The newness of love,  
the simplicity of life,  
an existence built upon  
bonfires and intimate conversations,  
black and white photographs of  
grinning faces, sun-sprinkled  
afternoons by the lake.

It is easier, after all, to forget about  
the way she bit her nails  
until they bled her insecurities,

The way she stood in front of  
a floor-length mirror,  
practicing her perfect smile until  
she no longer recognized the distorted shapes  
that gazed back at her from the other side.  
The tangled images taunted her with the  
realization that she would never live that practiced  
perfected vision of herself  
that she would later name  
"Memory."

*Kelly Salter  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

# Untitled

Only the withered bouquet  
knows of romanticism,  
only the broken glass  
can speak of completeness.

There are roofs  
of dispassionate shingles,  
there are pages  
as disparate as calendars—  
then there are memories,  
blood-stained furnishings  
that make complete  
the forlorn quarters of our soul.

If I wished to know who I am  
I'd simply ask the forgotten cobblestone street  
or a disinterred city.  
The easiest to learn would be  
My past,  
thin, and so full of patterns  
like printed calico.

White is the banner of life.  
The marriage of cyan, jade, crimson,  
The violets scarcely detectable  
remain pure,  
the masquerades and funerals are one,  
the tiled roofs provide sanctuary,  
until we look upon them  
with eyes  
as disparaging as prisms.

*Andrew Jones  
Landrum High School  
Michelle Dover*

## Circumference

Orion wears his belt crooked  
like my great-aunt—  
still a hippie,  
she swears her  
rhinestone waistband is  
made of starts.  
But some of the jewels are missing,  
the clasps bent outward like stiff  
fingers she sometimes  
re-fills with Tic-Tacs,  
slipping them into her  
mouth at night,  
dreaming of *Alnilam*,  
belt of pearls,  
until the spearmint flavor  
fades.

Before her second child,  
my mom's wedding, and the most  
recent presidential assassination,  
her skin was smooth and  
tight as the pantyhose she  
always refused to wear,  
displaying short legs  
flecked with brown moles  
she connected with magic  
markers, dot to dot,  
scorpions and bears  
soon smeared from shaving  
and the curious hands of boys.

When I touch her accessories,  
she makes me wear  
thick gloves, as if I were stroking  
an incubated baby.  
But the belt itself

I am not allowed to hold,  
lest the radiation sear me  
through the material,  
raise starry blisters on my flesh.  
Yet despite her warnings, I know  
what she really fears  
is that her incandescent binding  
will fall apart.

*Kelly Wright  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## **Inside My Skin**

Sobbing uncontrollably like a little girl, I feel lost and alone  
reach out and take my hand, you'll feel my sorrow

Sometimes I feel them, feel them pinching me, and kicking me  
trying to mold me into place

I am trying to run away,  
all I want, is to be free  
with my wings, and tear up the sky

pulling me back, devouring my dreams,  
they tear at my flesh,  
trying to make me fit

I scream and yell, twist and turn, inside my skin  
no matter how hard you try, you can't get in

*Daniella Webb  
Riverside High School  
Ms. McKeithan*

# Neogenesis

I was Adam, numb, and looking for Eden.  
You, sweet Eve, were a surgeon. Operate, please.  
Drive your scalpel into my heart. Deep,  
So we can both look for Paradise together.

My heart awoke, now alive like never before,  
Bellowing forth a euphoric cocktail of emotions  
That swept me (happily) up, pulled me under,  
Left me helpless while you...

You, sweet Eve, changed trades, became an Assassin,  
And Eden was no longer on your agenda,  
Your scalpel, now a serpent. My heart, now the apple.  
You bite into it, knowingly. I understand,

I understand pain now, I understand love, joy...  
(Oh, I miss the joy!) You left. Unfamiliar tears fall,  
Eden falls from me. I alone, empty now as before,  
Sat contemplating, and a voice within me, God's voice, spoke up.

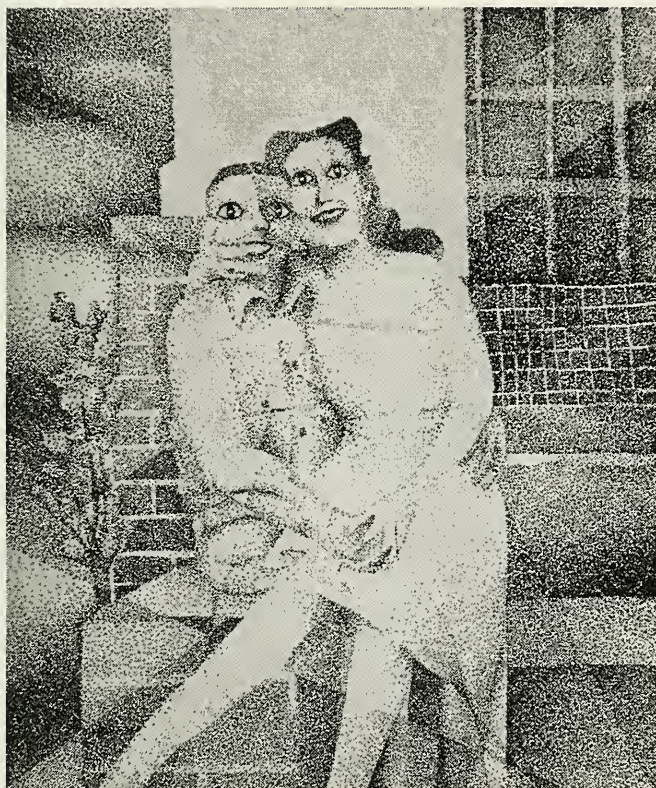
He screamed, "Don't weep, you pathetic, little shit!  
Get up! Feed off pain and joy, they are all you have,  
All you need! Be happy, you are now a real boy  
And these feelings are your Fairy Godmother."

Stunned, afraid. I reached into my wound, felt the pain,  
Remember the joy. I gained everything, lost everything. I am alive.  
My hand emerged from my empty chest clutching a fortune cookie,  
My fortune read: TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS. KEEP YOUR CHIN  
UP.

Thank you, sweet Eve, for everything.  
For being man's true creator.

*Matthew Stoop  
Greenville High School  
Bernard Zaidman*

## Sue & Cliff



*Christine Anlicker  
Dorman High School  
David Benson*

## That Four Letter Word

We all are guilty.  
Almost instinctively, the words escape  
Without much thought.  
They really don't mean much though,  
And we know that.  
After all, it's just a word, right?

Oh shit, I stubbed my toe.  
Damn it, burnt my toast.  
What the hell?  
They don't mean anything, just a word.  
They don't lie to us, make us feel secure,  
Like others of the same length.

I think I fell in love...  
Are you sure that's what you fell into?  
I want to make love...  
Oh, do you have the recipe?  
I will love you better...  
Better than what, your car?  
I love pizza  
I love my dog  
I love NY  
I love stars  
I love playing football  
I love you  
Sorry, you're going to have to explain.  
We all are guilty.  
Without thought the words escape.  
They really don't mean much,  
And we know that.

*Noah Jacobs  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

# Love Giggles

Hands clinging to  
a bouquet  
violets, lilies, and dandelions  
clusters of music—a sound of  
trust and love  
a garden of laughter

Take the moment  
run  
laugh  
be light  
let chimes sing  
when love is found

Love's soft desire  
...ah, a very splendid ending!

Oh—such a pure desire  
laughter!...  
la de da de da  
regard love  
like this

Laugh in the moonlight  
time will be still  
our hopes and desires  
keep true

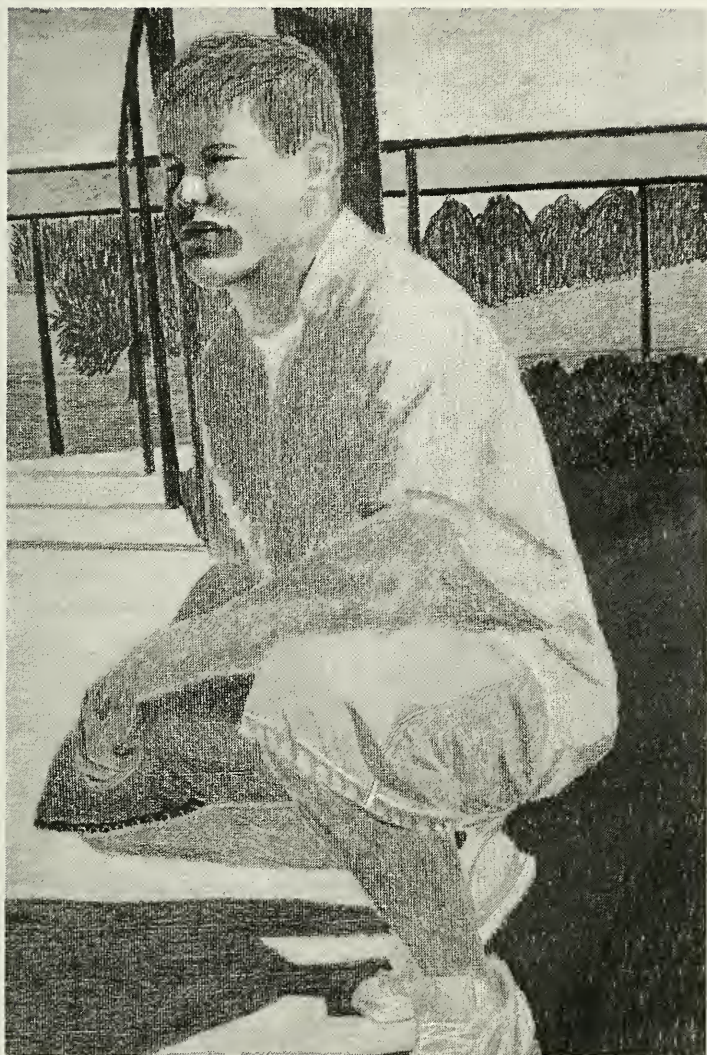
*B. Michelle Corn  
Boiling Springs High School  
Kay Hames*

## Heart-thorn?

He loves her not-  
for her full blossom,  
but her fragrance.  
He loves her so-  
for her smile,  
but not her lips.  
He loves her not-  
for her long legs,  
but her walk.  
He loves her much-  
for her silence,  
but not her coyness.  
He loves her not-  
for her materials' worth,  
but her value.  
He loves her...presence  
-a prick, ouch!  
but when will she  
return his love?

*Roeun Eang*  
*Boiling Springs High School*  
*Kay Hames*

## Self Portrait



*Alan Foy  
Chesnee High School  
Janis Browning*

## Palm

There are some things that I will always see  
    When I close my eyes  
The soft pink of my new name  
Wrapped in slices of time  
    Ticks—suck the life from my skin—talks

The way your hand was made  
    To hold my waist  
Swaying royal palm  
    Heavy with fruit —now out of reach  
Three eyes watching you from the fronds

Sweet, fragrant smoke  
    The cloud you captured for your own  
The name you made for yourself  
    With fiery eyes and charcoal lips  
    Hungry for fruit  
The pillar of salty air reaching  
    Dancing in the fronds  
    Purging for another slice

*Bethany O'Hara*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Paul Thomas*

?

Love is blind  
And yes it will take over your mind  
Be careful before you decide on love  
Is it just rebound, or something sent from above?  
Make sure the person is right  
Before you have that special night  
All "I Love Yous" are not the same  
Some of them are just part of a game  
Don't let yourself fall into the hit-and-run  
A few minutes to an hour and it'll be done  
This part is for the ladies:  
Now pay close attention and don't forget to mention  
That a virgin you are and you plan to be until you're married  
If you are not a virgin that's okay too, but for you this game isn't  
new  
For the non-virgins you're a little bit wiser and less vulnerable,  
too.  
Both male and female are to blame  
For this confusing game that ends up a shame  
And to all the fellows:  
Treat the ladies with respect  
Because what you give is what you get  
Don't go around robbing girls of their pride  
Not all girls are looking for the joy ride  
The purpose of this was to let you all know  
That having sex isn't always the way to go.

*Tanika L. Taylor*  
*Southside High School*  
*Ms. Ransome*

## Tarzan

he says I'm better than church,  
his arms, crossed and the color of cigars  
beside mine, blooming toward my waist  
like cigarette burns;  
while his eyes, dishwater gray like old  
rain puddled in a parking lot,  
almost leave stains on my white Sunday dress.

*Emily Smith  
Woodruff High School  
Paul Thomas*

## Blab and Back-Stab (Boyfriends to Nab)

There you are Claire! I've been looking for you!  
Did you give him the note like I asked you to do?  
What it is, I can't tell you—this secret's best kept.  
You'll find out soon enough; my plan's perfect except  
For just one little problem that won't last for long...  
Did you *see* her this morning? She must wear a thong  
'Cause those pants that she's wearing adhere to her butt!  
Oh, I swear, I don't know why he's with such a slut.  
But of course I don't mean it—I'm in a bad mood.  
Oh, my gosh, now she's stuffing her face with some food.  
Don't you think I'm much thinner and nicer than she?  
Now, you're *sure* that you gave him the note that's from me?

*Beth Murff  
Boiling Springs High School  
Kay Hames*

## Misery

Misery is a blues song sung in the rain.  
The sound of harmonics and taps of the toe  
Keep the beat to the penetrating pain.  
All traces of delight are replaced with woe.  
As the pitch goes high and slices the heart,  
The clouds remain thick with no sign of the sun.  
Smothered emotions begin to rip apart,  
As truthful lyrics hit harshly like stray bullets from a gun.  
Each chord provokes the anguish within, hidden so deep.  
The tears now start to flow from their inner dam,  
And the staccato notes ape every weep,  
Bleating sadly like a small, abandoned lamb.  
And the song continues to drift down Melancholy Street,  
While the splashes of water still keep the beat.

*Amanda Miller  
Blacksburg High School  
Sharon E. Glass*

## It Could Happen

She's handcrafted to sheer perfection.  
Her heart is made of genuine, pure granite.  
She stands a whopping five feet seven inches.  
She has full, round hips and ample breasts.  
Long, beautiful hair that falls right at the small of her back.  
She never talks back or questions authority.  
She's just a beautiful, speechless, lifeless piece of art.  
Simply place her in one spot and  
she'll be your permanent arm ornament all night.  
To order your very own, call  
1-800-EVERYMANSFANTASY.

*Nikki Harris  
Daniel High School  
Nancy Swanson*

Me



*Ellen Anderson  
Louis Story  
Broome High School*

# The Girl

*"The most exhilarating thing I've ever done was to have an intelligent conversation with a woman." (Casanova)*

Here she comes – man you got to love that smell!  
Long, sleek, wavy hair  
Eyes you could fall into and never find your way out  
Legs that make you squint  
All of it topped off by a black dress & high heels  
Makes you thank whatever gods there are that you're a man  
She turns & looks at you – oh boy – here goes  
You *James Dean* your way over to her  
Her hands fidget  
"Hullo, my name's Andrew..."  
All of the looks don't mean a thing if what comes next isn't sensible & keen  
So what will it be, are you just another looker  
Or is there life past the gilded edge...

*Andrew M. Phillips  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

## Rainbows

Chasing the butterfly we never catch,  
We run through fields,  
Green grass specked with dandelions.  
The five mile drive to the bank  
At 4:59 PM;  
Mid-town traffic.  
Sand slipping through the hourglass  
As we ask for more time.  
Waves sailing away  
And love fading.  
We all chase rainbows.

*Kelly Owens  
Spartanburg High School  
Edwin Epps*

## Giving Up

Giving up  
Is hard to do,  
When it comes to you  
  
But when all I feel is hurt,  
I'd rather be alone,  
Then to live a sad song.

*Danielle Knighton  
Woodruff High School  
Mrs. Westmorland*

# Untitled



*Jon Knox Griffin  
Spartanburg Day School  
Nancy Corbin*

## From You

Straight from your face  
I feel the disgrace  
Straight from your eyes  
I see the tears you cry  
Straight from your lips  
I know what you'll say  
And straight from your hands  
Your heart finds a way  
Straight from your mind  
You can always find  
That straight from your heart  
Leads into mine

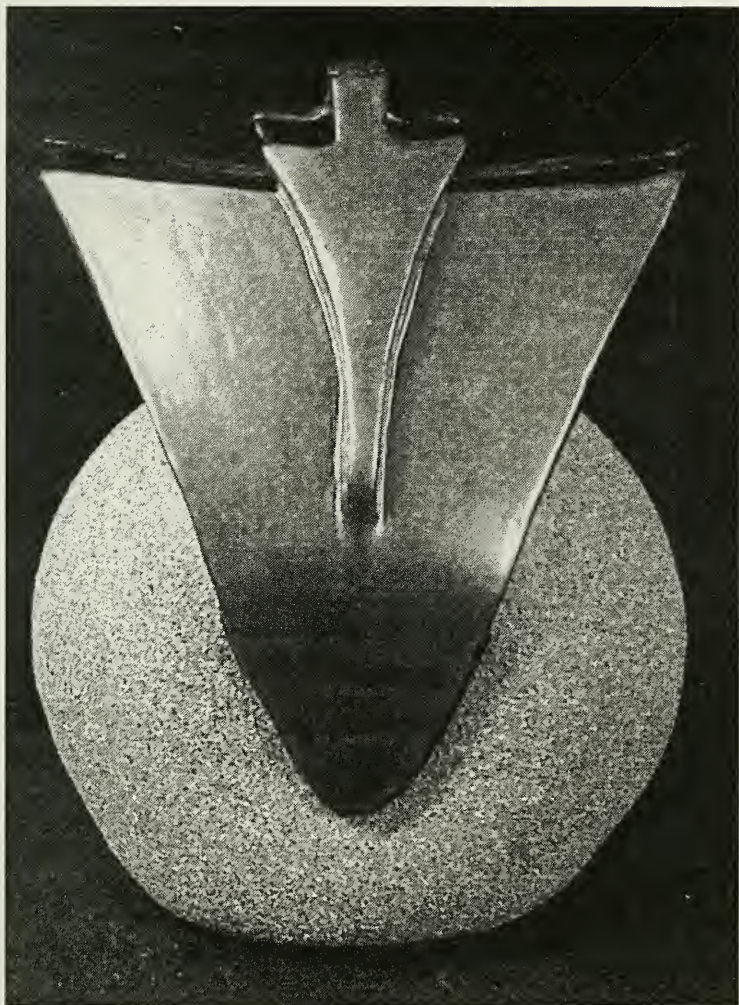
*Jessica Simpson  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

## Ceiling lights

hands on knees as we coast through the  
ceiling lights  
clicking radio dial and Drake,  
a commercial summer breeze.  
your sing along whisper puts the crickets  
to shame; your hand along the air  
is the envy of all the sleeping birds.  
enclosed in walls of moss we see the  
blinking lights  
sticking vinyl seat and Stevens,  
a cinematic rain storm.  
your metronome breathing puts the owls  
at ease; your arm along the seat  
is the desire of all the world.  
behind our closed eyes I see the  
ceiling lights

*Tera Rolander  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

# Untitled



*Alane Shelley  
Spartanburg High School  
Nancy Harrison*

## Purgatory

Bleed you blind,  
Scratch you deaf,  
See you gone,  
Hear you left.  
Once was here,  
Now has fled,  
Flew away,  
In-to the dead.  
Hot as hell,  
Cold as ice,  
Devils dance,  
Sacrifice.  
Hurry up,  
Make your mind,  
You're too late,  
Got left behind.  
You're left behind,  
You've seen your life,  
You cut the silence,  
With a knife.  
Speak your mind,  
Tell the truth,  
Talk them blind,  
But where's your proof?

*Brandi Price*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Kim Dionne*

# Untitled



*Alex Tisdale  
Dorman High School  
Susan West*

## Fertility

Thrice  
you've told me  
that I tasted like  
diamonds soaked in petrol  
with the shine peeled off,  
like onion skin folded into a  
china box, painted with  
thirty-three sparrows,  
each one a wound of Caesar.  
Instead of pouring blood,  
they dripped copper  
into pools that formed  
five hundred pennies.

I would take those pennies,  
and put them in a canvas sack  
once filled with grain.  
I would place it  
under the small of my back,  
so that when I slept  
my womb would be arched  
towards Heaven.

*Maggie Johnston  
Fine Arts Center  
Claire Bateman*

## Enchantress

The little dancer flickered.  
Wavered with anticipation,  
And I set her free.  
As she fell to the floor,  
She began to dance.  
It charmed the floor,  
And as the floor was captivated,  
Other sorcerers sprang up  
And danced with her.  
And they danced everywhere,  
Leaving behind them more dancers  
Until they had delighted  
Everything.

But, I could not live  
With so much voodoo.  
And so I eased the thirst  
Of the enchanted  
To calm the charmers,  
And they dwindled away  
Seating themselves  
In a quieter medium—  
All their energy gone,  
And the traces of their magic  
Left upon those enraptured,  
Scored with the everlasting mark  
Of the enchantress.

*William Bryant  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

## Eternity

I grip the thorn  
From the rose  
It pierces my skin  
To the bone  
I squeeze from the wound  
An aesthete's tear  
And let it fall  
Into the receding tides of eternity

*Ashima Bhatti  
Boiling Springs High School  
Kay Hames*

## Wishing Star

I wish I was the star the  
young wishers wish  
on.  
Making all their happy dreams  
come true.  
I wish I could shine down on  
all little dreamers  
And be the one to light up  
their tear stained faces.  
To make their dreams become  
reality.  
And to have them come  
back each night  
In hopes I'll share  
my magic as  
they sleep.

*Tina Thomas  
Dorman High School  
Steve Smith*

# Chlorine



*Stephanie Foster*  
*Woodruff High School*  
*Diana Olencki*

## Fallen Angel

Why does an angel fly so high  
Do they bleed, do they cry...  
Can the tears of heaven be the blood we shed,  
In war and peace, the cries of the dead...  
Can the wind be screams of those fallen in pain,  
A fallen Angel, that bleeds the rain...  
Does Heaven shine the light or do clouds just fade,  
Will shadows cover the earth where the fallen lie...  
Can a fallen angel rise from the death again,  
Or must she bleed the rain...

*Travis Sanford  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

## I am Judas

I am Judas  
torn,  
alone,  
empty  
I simply am  
Yet I wish I was not  
I am banished  
exiled  
Betrayed by my body,  
I am now a soul damned  
For the actions  
Of unknowing hands  
I am weeping  
Judas

*Joshua Branning  
J.L. Mann High School  
Sara Lochridge*

## Wind Swept

Rhythmic vibrations stretching down the  
twisting road and out of sight,  
for the tired sky's drooping eyes  
can't see it anymore.

It's lost forever

Interchanging sunlight brightening my  
little corner of everyone's life.

Sweat cooled and chased away  
by my elderly time's wet residue.  
Pure and innocent.

I'm sure to be noticed one damp,  
humid day,  
formed in the shape of a pale woman,  
created in the underbelly of  
adjacent clouds,  
bottomed out by the repetitive  
motion of passing by and by  
again.

Watching from prior undisturbed  
sheets of hardened rainfall,  
taken away from the sweet, sway of  
the ocean.

And the soft spray of waves,  
formed and reformed in the  
fecund sight of my  
abbreviated life,  
maybe not even worth the time  
spent to live it.

*Henry Anderson  
Dorman High School  
Steve Smith*

## I Remember

I remember walking along your bank, as the soft sand seeped through my  
toes.  
I remember slowly stepping into your clear blue water as I dampened all  
my clothes.  
I remember wading across the shallow water and climbing up on the other  
side.  
I remember grabbing hold of the old rope swing that we used to ride.  
I remember jumping off the grassy ledge and holding on with all my  
might.  
I remember letting go of the splintery rope and closing my eyes very tight.  
Then, I remember how the frigid cold yanked my breath away,  
As I plunged into the icy creek where we used to play.

*Lindsey Siddens  
Riverside High School  
Carolyn York Ramey*

## Yellow

Yellow—

the waning sun leaving a kiss of last light,  
as it yields to crackling fire on a chill September night;  
the sunflowers sagging on top of a weary stalk,  
nodding at an unread paper on the bench by the walk;  
the fading memory of soft sand pulling my soles with the tide;  
the echoes of homework calling me to come inside;  
the new growth of pumpkins and the promise of apple trees;  
the crushed cushion of still supple fallen leaves.  
the warmth remaining when the hot is gone;  
the soft sadness that won't leave me alone.

*Sarah Christine Walters  
Greenville High School  
Demi Osborne*

## Self Portrait



*Robert Andrews  
Chesnee High School  
Janis Browning*

## Where's the Love

My car is like my girlfriend  
When I first saw her, it was love at first sight  
Her color a dark black  
Her body wide  
Headlights smoking  
Looked good at first  
But appearance is deceptive  
It was the sight that had me tricked  
We were like a used motor; it didn't work  
From then on, my heart was hurt  
I didn't want to let her go  
If I got that new motor, I just knew we could make it work  
But she didn't want me any more  
Maybe a new owner would come along  
I spent all my money to make sure she looked better  
Than those showroom beauties  
I fed her natural resources  
I checked the oil, the tires, even the anti-freeze  
I don't know where I went wrong  
Maybe I took those curves too fast  
Maybe I left her out in the cold  
One too many times  
Whatever it was,  
She left me standing

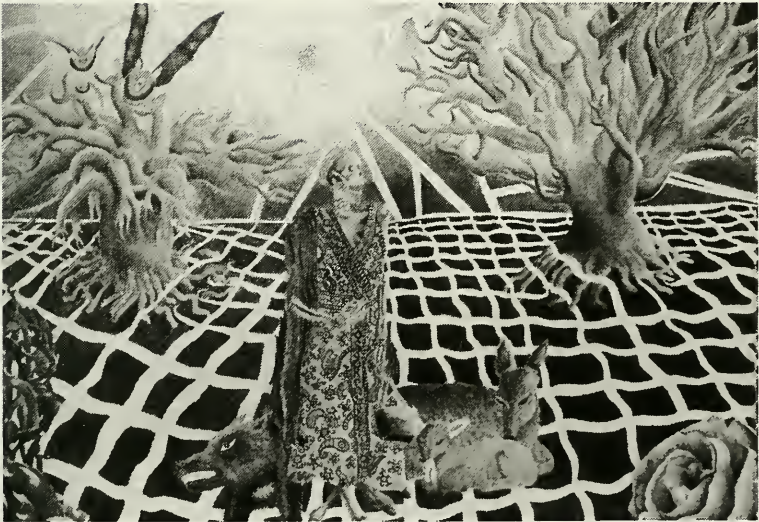
*Troy Adams  
Broome High School  
June Bowman*

## Out of Step

thesamestreetsthesamedamnstreets  
wheretheymeetandfocusandfoamattheir  
slimygapingmouths  
totramplesoulslikesardines  
andclimbkickandcrawltothetopof  
somecrowdedmessofstability  
whileI'mlosingtheracebutlaughinglikehell.

*John Edgerton  
Boiling Springs High School  
Kay Hames*

## Nightmare



*Aaron Chastain  
Dorman High School  
Susanne Gunter*

## Weekend Mornings

I would rise wearily from the warm bed  
To the shrieking of the alarm clock  
Thinking of many my age  
Who would not wake for hours  
But not envying them  
I made my way to the golf course  
Those weekend mornings  
Often I was one of the first to arrive  
My golf cart whined across the dew-soaked grass  
As I braved the cold morning wind  
And smiled because the tracks of my tires  
Were the first tracks of the day  
The first of many who would pass the same way  
Others spent those weekend mornings asleep  
While I was busy being the first of many  
To cross that frigid tundra  
Leaving twin lines in the wet grass  
As the marks of my conquest  
There was too much to do to sleep  
Those weekend mornings

*Daniel Toms  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

# The Tele-Evangelist

Dancin with snakes  
Speakin in tongues  
Overcome by spirit  
Sing at the top of yer lungs

Televisе

You wanna know Jesus  
Just give us a holler  
We kin give ya salvation  
Save yer soul fer a dollar

Hypnotize

Cast out Satan  
Fall on the floor en make a scene  
Go to church on yer lazy boy  
Just call the number on yer screen

Paralyze

*Eliza Bagwell*  
*Daniel High School*  
*Nancy Swanson*

## The Rockling Rose

The clouds came fast,  
And the rains came thoroughly.  
Yet they soon passed,  
And the glimmers of the tombstones  
Upon the graves shined once more  
As the sun reappeared.

It seemed as though the day would be beautiful,  
And a bright, red rose appeared,  
Trying as it might to make the day meaningful.  
But this showing of life and happiness,  
Coming about from this rose,  
Would not be tolerated by the stones upon the grave.

For they were omniscient and understanding.  
To allow this rose to grow,  
Would be allowing hope and happiness,  
To grow within life itself.  
And this would be wrong!  
Life was not meant for happiness!

In fact, part of life is realizing you have no  
control,  
And nothing in life is good.  
There is nothing in which to look forward to.  
Nothing, that is, except death.  
And so the stones choked the rose out,  
Until it wilted, until it Died!

*Will Atwood  
Greenville High School  
Tarin Lewis*

## Sacrifice

The rain is falling harder  
As if coming from sad eyes,  
Reflecting loss and failing hope  
At this unworldly sacrifice.

Time stops in utter worry,  
Hearts race in disbelief.  
As the daylight only shortens  
Hearts of innocent slowly beat.

Thunder crashes like a building,  
Lightning fights unending wars.  
Cloud burst insults and terror  
High above these liquid floors.

So soon the rain in all its anger  
Will no longer seep into our lives,  
And the eyes that once saw sadness  
Reflect a joyful sacrifice.

*Callie Plaxco  
Greenville High School  
Tarin Lewis*

# Dolphin Friend

Did you know?

Did you know how I felt?

Did you know I was there?

Did you sense something was wrong?

Did you want to brighten my day, which was gray like your pale eyes?

Did you hear my heartbeat quicken?

Did you see my eyes grow with excitement?

Did you smell my feet as I stepped into the cold ocean water you call home?

Did you know that I nearly fainted upon the soft sand, when I saw you there?

Did you know I wanted to reach out and see how your skin felt beneath my fingers?

Did you know?

*Jamie Grubbs  
Woodruff High School  
Frances Mason*

## Tea Pot



*Morgan Willard  
Spartanburg Day School  
Amy Goldstein-Rice*

# The Jock

We've got game and we know it,  
And we out there to show it.

On the court  
On the field  
Or wherever we be  
We out there being all we could be.

In basketball I'm hopping,  
Bip-bopping,  
All over the court.  
At the top of the key  
It's good – what do ya expect from me?

In football I'm bashin', smashin'  
Get outta my way or we'll be crashin'  
I want my TD  
Ain't no way you gonna stop me.

In baseball I'm on the mound  
With my curve and fastball getting down.  
Strike one, two, and three. You're OUT.  
I put you in your place. The dugout!

*Hadassah Falby  
Blacksburg High School  
Dawn Bridges*

## Self Portrait



*Ashley Muse*  
*Wade Hampton High School*  
*Patricia Crandall*

## Senseless

They are a blight  
He said  
A waste of human flesh  
The 11th plague  
A mistake  
It is because of them  
We are poor  
Down-trodden  
Lowly  
It is they  
Who keeps us from  
the winning race  
They should pay  
And we will rise

So he spilt their blood  
And slew the innocent

So the people cheered  
And hailed him king  
For a time

*Andrew Fischer  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

# Untitled



*Asia Hamilton  
Spartanburg High School  
John Dennis*

# Picking Caterpillars off the Walls

Four years old picking caterpillars off the walls  
Back and forth in swings and down the slide  
Four years old counting licks to the center of the pop  
Taking long naps and smashing mushrooms in the yard

Four years old with swimmers on my arms  
Covered with sunscreen while chasing the birds  
Four years old begging mom for lemonade  
Sunglasses too big for my head and bare feet

Four years old and picky with food  
Fighting with brother and singing with Big Bird  
Four years old watching the daily Mr. Rogers  
Stupefied by big sister and walking around in daddy's shoes

Four years old and not a care in the world  
Eating snow cream and playing candyland  
Four years old enjoying puppet shows at the library  
Falling asleep on shoulders and being carried to bed

Four years old waking early on Christmas morning  
Jumping on the bed and building tents in the rooms  
Four years old crying over splinters  
Wearing bows in blond hair and pink fingernails

Four years old stomping anthills in dirt  
Pillow fights at night and roasting marshmallows  
Four years old laying in the hammock  
Pulling legs off spiders and playing with candle wax

Four years old running through the sprinklers  
Catching cooties and collecting stickers  
Four years old with a new puppy  
Tasting doggy biscuits and eating cookie dough

Four years old and afraid of firecrackers  
Hooking worms on fishing lines and catching lightning bugs  
Four years old with dreams of bigger things  
Sleeping with blankie and wishing on stars

*Stephanie Knapp  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

# Picking a College and Clearing Walls

Seventeen years old picking a college and clearing walls  
Back and forth in decisions and down the road to graduation  
Seventeen years old counting days to spring break  
Staying up late nights and getting tans in the yard

Seventeen years old with jewelry on my arms  
Covered with a smile while chasing the boys  
Seventeen years old begging mom for some money  
An ego too big for my head and four-inch shoes

Seventeen years old and not picky enough with food  
Fighting with brother and singing with burned CDs  
Seventeen years old watching the daily Oprah  
Best friends with big sister and walking around in knee high boots

Seventeen years old and too much to worry about  
Eating burgers and playing the violin  
Seventeen years old enjoying good books from the library  
Falling asleep at school and being dragged to the next class

Seventeen years old sleeping in everyday possible  
Snoring on the bed and locking the door to my room  
Seventeen years old crying over broken hearts  
Wearing tight clothes and clear fingernails

Seventeen years old stomping the ground while I run  
Hugging the pillow at night and fattening foods  
Seventeen years old laying in the hammock  
Pulling hair off my head because of stress

Seventeen years old running through life  
Catching moments and collecting memories  
Seventeen years old with a new future ahead  
Tasting options and cutting back on the cookie dough

Seventeen years old afraid of leaving  
Hooked to my home and already catching homesickness  
Seventeen years old with dreams of bigger things  
Dreaming of tomorrow and wishing on stars

*Stephanie Knapp  
Spartanburg High School  
Bill Pell*

## Rain Drops

Thick and thin like  
Bloody rage  
The felt tip dangles  
Before my eyes  
Lick of lips to  
Clean it from  
The glint of steel  
Drop by drop

Slice so fine like diamond hair  
Slit so fine from here to there  
Thin as ice, thick as cream  
The image, my little ones, will make you scream

Through and through my pain runs deep  
Softer still, not a night to sleep  
Open wider, silenter still  
Into night I send my soul by will

Slick, so slippery, so soft and frail  
My sanity hangs from the bough, don't tip the scale  
Like a peach, so juicy and warm  
Red slides over me like a glove, en forme

*Jennifer Henderson  
Southside High School  
Phyllis Grubbs*



